



CITIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

A HISTORY OF SIENA

FROM ITS ORIGINS TO
THE PRESENT DAY

Mario Ascheri and Bradley Franco

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A HISTORY OF SIENA

A History of Siena provides a concise and up-to-date biography of the city, from its ancient and medieval development up to the present day, and makes Siena's history, culture, and traditions accessible to anyone studying or visiting the city.

Well informed by archival research and recent scholarship on medieval Siena and the Italian city-states, this book places Siena's development in its larger context, both temporally and geographically. In the process, this book offers new interpretations of Siena's artistic, political, and economic development, highlighting in particular the role of pilgrimage, banking, and class conflict. The second half of the book provides an important analysis of the historical development of Siena's nobility, its unique system of neighborhood associations (*contrade*), and the race of the Palio, as well as an overview of the rise and fall of Siena's troubled bank, the Monte dei Paschi.

This book is accessible to undergraduates and tourists, while also offering plenty of new insights for graduate students and scholars of all periods of Sienese history.

Mario Ascheri, a former professor at the University of Rome 3, Italy, has written extensively on institutions, law, and justice in the Middle Ages and on Italian supreme courts in early modern history. He is a former member of the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and is a senior fellow of the Robbins Collection Library (Law School, University of California, Berkeley, USA), and doctor h.c. of the Université de l'Auvergne (Clermont-Ferrand), France. Author and editor of hundreds of books and articles on Siena, Dr. Ascheri was awarded the prestigious Sienese award, the Mangia d'oro, in 2003.

Bradley Franco is Associate Professor of Ancient and Medieval History at the University of Portland, USA, and is the author of numerous publications focusing on religion, community, family, and power in late medieval Siena. He has also published extensively on Franciscan studies and organized the first ever International Conference for Franciscan Studies in Siena in 2015. Along with Dr. Ascheri, Dr. Franco is a proud member of the *contrada* of Onda.

CITIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

Cities of the Ancient World examines the history, archaeology and cultural significance of key cities from across the ancient world, spanning northern Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, Asia and the Near East. Each volume explores the life of a significant place, charting its developments from its earliest history, through the transformations it experienced under different cultures and rulers, through to its later periods. These texts offer academics, students, and the interested reader comprehensive and scholarly accounts of the life of each city.

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A History of Siena

From its Origins to the Present Day

Mario Ascheri and Bradley Franco

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A HISTORY OF SIENA

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*Mario Ascheri
and Bradley Franco*

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PREFACE

Fabrizio Ricciardelli, Kent State University, Florence, Italy

Mario Ascheri and Brad Franco's book on the history of Siena is a masterful combination of methodical rigor and a wealth of data communicated in an enjoyably fluid style. Despite the distinctly synthetic approach of this highly informative work, it does not neglect even minor episodes when these have a significant bearing on the city's history. It offers insights into the customs and practices, the food and the bureaucracy, the neighborhood associations (*contrade*) and the forms of solidarity that characterized Siennese history, consistently viewed from a global perspective. One of the most important contributions of this book is the food for thought it offers on the subject of republicanism and its different expressions. Using the paradigmatic example of Siena, Ascheri and Franco draw on their backgrounds as historians of law, institutions, and culture to produce a substantial work of history and political science.

Like many other cities in central-northern Italy, in the course of the tenth century Siena too acquired specific privileges, exploiting the crisis of the *Regnum Italiae*. When the Commune of the Consuls emerged in Siena, the aristocratic elite that governed it was dependent on the approval of the ordinary citizens, namely those who did not own a warhorse. Consular Siena was pro-Ghibelline and boasted a lively civic spirit. Strengthened by the wealth imported by the *mercatores* in Champagne, it began the ascent to greatness that materialized in the start of building work on the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, the institution of the canons' school that supplied leading ecclesiastics to the Roman Curia, the construction of the great hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, and the courses of university teaching provided by the Commune. The authors point out that the *popolo* began to be spoken of even in the consular phase of the commune in Siena, and that the businessmen had dealings with both the Empire and the Papacy. They trace the emergence of the aversion toward Florence that helped strengthen in the Siennese the value of the *civitas* and hence of the *res publica*.

Ascheri and Franco clearly illustrate how the long era of the Sieneſe Republic began in 1287, with the installation in government of the ſo-called Nove, or Nine, members of the government who held ſway over the city and its hinterland up to 1355. The principal objectives of the Nove were to officially guarantee juſtice to all citizens irreſpective of political ſtatus, to aſſure the peace and unity of the city, and to ensure, through the fair diſtribution of the honors (and burdens) of government, the equitable allocation of offices among thoſe admitted to full political rights. The Republic looked after the welfare of the citizens and the development of the city, and all meaſures were aimed at guaranteeing the right and duty of good citizens to take part in the civic government. As in many other cities of central-northern Italy, in Siena too the offices were aſſigned on rotation for ſhort periods of time – from two to ſix months – ſo as to ensure a balanced access to the Concistoro, the principal organ of city government. The overarching conſtituent element of this republicanism was the mythical enthronement of values ſuch as peace, liberty, proſperity, and, above all, the participation of all the citizens in the Good Government.

In this long expoſé of Sieneſe history, Ascheri and Franco linger in particular on the period that followed the experience of the Nove. In this phase, admission to the Concistoro and the other offices was diſciplined by diſtributing the families within the *monti* governing at the time, ſo as to guarantee territorial representation. For over a century, the companies of the city diſtricts – the ſo-called *societates* – were the linchpin of the republican conſtitutional ſystem. They were reſponsible for collecting the names of the popular candidates entitled to ſit on the Consiglio del popolo, of which all thoſe who had ſerved for two months in the Concistoro were life members. Since in the courſe of the fifteenth century the population of Siena averaged around 20,000 inhabitants, the authors point out that – before the watershed of 1480 – the number of thoſe ſitting on the Consiglio del popolo reached the level of around 800. The republican conſtitutional tradition even managed to withſtand the oligarchic attempts of the mid-fifteenth century. Not even the impositions of the Spaniſh, who were ready to expel the exponents of the Nove from government, managed to unhinge the Sieneſe republican ſystem, a political organiſm ſolid enough even to withſtand the inſiſtent preſſure of the French.

When Cosimo I de' Medici took poſſeſſion of the State of Siena in 1557, ſubjected two years before after a long ſiege, the city continued to maintain its traditional magiſtracies, which Florence was never able to diſmantle, deſpite obviously exerting ultimate political control through its local truſtees. The fact that the Florentine Grand Duke never had his office in the Palazzo Pubblico – which had always been the ſeat of popular representation in the city – confirms that the Florentines were never ſtrong enough to penetrate the political heart of Siena. Inſtead of installing their government in the Palazzo Pubblico, they had to content themſelves with a ſite next to the Cathedral in the Palazzo del Governatore (now housing the prefect's office and the provincial authority), which although a fine building in its own right was anything but emblematic of the city's political identity. Even when, in 1561, Cosimo I de' Medici drafted a far-reaching reform of the Sieneſe ſtate, which ſignificantly reflected the criteria that had guided his

government of Florence, Siena was never thoroughly conquered by Florence but continued to remain merely a territory of the Tuscan capital: a political entity with a historic republican system that was never profoundly affected. Even under Medici rule, the Concistoro continued to meet every two months in the Palazzo Pubblico, where the frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti never failed to inspire the assembly with the profound republican spirit of the city.

The habit of the Sienese of occupying themselves with the *res publica* had been deeply rooted for centuries and remained intact up to the sweeping reforms of Peter Leopold. Sienese republicanism lived on even in later periods, through the university, which consistently managed to attract prominent figures, through the Bank of the Monte dei Paschi, the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, the academies, the welfare institutes, and the magnificent Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. The republican legend remained vital even when the extraordinary faith in the institutions began to falter after World War I, in the Fascist era, and after World War II, not to mention more recent times when the oldest bank in the world, the Monte dei Paschi, was at the center of a financial scandal that plunged the entire community into severe crisis.

In short, Mario Ascheri and Brad Franco's book is a profound and valuable work addressed to a broad public. It is a book that succeeds in demonstrating how the republican system that was constantly present throughout Siena's history became paradigmatic. Over the centuries that followed the Middle Ages, the republican government of this city became ingrained in society, and it reveals its capacity to guide us through the twists and turns of the history of Western democracies. I am in fact convinced that, in its complexity, the case of Siena constitutes one of the most tangible models available for understanding the dynamics of contemporary political systems.



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INTRODUCTION

Siena captivates. Under the Tuscan sun, its monuments and cobblestone streets radiate an antiquity, a permanence, an overwhelming beauty. Under the moonlight, Siena charms: the Piazza del Campo's cafés buzz with locals and university students, while members of local neighborhoods march with the flags of their *contrada*, singing their neighborhood's unique songs in unison. Siena inspires: how a city of only 55,000 could be heir to so many late medieval and Renaissance artistic and architectural masterpieces allows us to examine the relationship between creativity, place, and culture. Few places in Europe inspire such a fierce loyalty among its populace while causing visitors, five million of whom flock to the city each year, to fall under its seductive charm.

Given the city's size, Siena's contributions to Western civilization are unparalleled. One of the most stable republics of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Siena was the first to publish its constitution in the language of the people in 1309, giving its citizens access to justice. Duccio's *Maestà*, completed in 1311, helped usher in a new era of art that led to the Italian Renaissance, in which artists were revered and where beauty and elegance allowed viewers to feel closer to the divine. Only three decades after Duccio completed his masterpiece, Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted his frescoes on *Good and Bad Government*, which helped move Italian art beyond a primarily religious focus as governments felt increasingly emboldened to follow Lorenzetti's model by using art as political propaganda for ruling elites. The same century also witnessed the Siennese attempting to construct the largest cathedral in the world, only to have their hopes dashed by architectural problems with the construction coupled with the arrival of the gruesome Black Death, which killed a significant part of the population and forced the Siennese to check their ambition.

Beyond Siena's political, artistic, and architectural legacy, the city is famous today for its Palio festival and *contrada* (pl. *contrade*) system. For 800 years, Siena has been the site of horse races, and for nearly half a millennium, those Palio races, named for

2 Introduction

the artistic cloth (*palio*) or banner that the victor receives, have taken place between the city's neighborhoods twice a year around the Piazza del Campo. While the Palio and the pageantry, solemnity, and fervor that it inspires get all the attention, Siena's unique system of *contrade* is what gives the Palio its significance. In fact, the *contrade*, namely, the 17 neighborhoods of the city, each with several thousand members and its own *contrada* colors, flag, emblem, church, social club, and gardens, are at the heart of Siennese identity and community. The *contrade* inspire a fealty to one's neighborhood and city that is so intense and so singular as to demand close investigation in any study of the city.

This book, then, has two chief goals. It seeks to examine the history of Siena from its origins in order to understand the city's contributions to the development of the modern world. It also seeks to make the twenty-first-century city, as well as its *contrade*, Palio, and traditions comprehensible to anyone visiting the city. To do so, we will have to look beyond the traditional myths, such as the city's special relationship to the Virgin Mary or its ability to succeed in the face of steep physical limitations, which have only served to romanticize the city and its storied past. In fact, Siena's historical importance was rooted in its location, which allowed it to be a crucial center of banking, commerce, and trade for centuries. In addition, international visitors have long been a crucial economic engine of the city, whether it has been in the form of medieval pilgrims on their way to Rome or modern-day tourists visiting the city as part of their own Grand Tour of Italy. In fact, as we will see, Siena's monuments and beauty need to be understood in terms of the ways in which they were both made possible and necessary owing to the city's reliance on outsiders. More broadly, Siena's history was closely connected to the fate of its banks and commercial institutions. In fact, it's only slightly oversimplifying the situation to state that Siennese exceptionalism, at its core, is the byproduct of the city's wealth, in particular its chief financial institutions. Since the thirteenth century, Siena's wealth has made possible the city's monuments, art, and political stability, all of which helped the city attract visitors and civic investment that, in turn, have served to enrich the city's institutions and its inhabitants. In short, for much of its history, Siena has been a wealthy city, with the means of supporting its inhabitants, valuing its cultural heritage, funding monuments, and maintaining their upkeep. And by doing so, they've attracted millions to visit the city, which has further strengthened Siena's economy, and has created a virtuous feedback loop where the more the Siennese have invested in the city, the more outsiders have done the same.

As we will see, an analysis of Siena's relationship with its financial industry also helps explain those periods of difficulty in the city's history. For instance, when Siena's great Tuscan rival, Florence, managed to finagle the banking business of the popes in the fourteenth century, Siena underwent a series of economic and political upheavals from which it never fully recovered. In more recent times, Siena has been the recipient of extensive patronage from the city's famed Monte dei Paschi di Siena and has received billions from the bank's Foundation in recent decades for artistic restorations, historical studies, building renovations, championship-caliber pro sports teams, *contrada* expenses, and much more. And yet, recent years have

witnessed a tragic turn in the bank's finances, and as a result, in Siena's fortunes. In the aftermath of the global recession of 2008, the Monte dei Paschi found itself holding a staggering amount of toxic debt, bankrupting the bank, the Foundation, and abruptly ending the period in Siena's history where "Babbo Monte" (Daddy Monte, or, in effect, "sugar daddy") was able to provide for the benefit of the city. Only by examining the long history of the city from its origins can the modern city and its present circumstances become fully intelligible.

Yet as we will see, throughout the city's history, the Sieneſe have had to contend with forces beyond their control, from outbreaks of plague and famine and powerful kings who wished to subdue Siena, to the grand dukes and the World Wars. Siena's modern challenges may be unique, but the city has faced and overcome great challenges before, and there are many reasons to believe that the future for the Sieneſe is still bright. It is our hope that by examining the long history of the city, readers will come to better understand the city today, its relationship with its past, its people, and their *contrade*, and Siena's uncertain future.

Siena, 1 December 2018

M.A. and B.F.

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PART I

From the origins of Siena
to the fall of the Sienese
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1

THE ORIGINS OF SIENA

From the Etruscans to the Romans

For all cities, their development and destiny are rooted in their unique natural environment. Rome stands as perhaps the greatest example of this truism: its seven hills made it virtually unconquerable, while the Tiber provided the Romans with easy access to the Mediterranean, allowing them to import enough food to feed a million mouths a day and to command an army and navy capable of governing its three-continent empire. Beyond just Rome, throughout the history of the Mediterranean world, all the great powers and great cities were, quite naturally, located on or near water. Millions of gallons of daily drinking water were necessary to support the populations of the largest cities, and waterways were the most efficient way to trade, conduct overseas war, and travel. Within the history of Italian cities, Genoa, Pisa, and Venice all made their fortunes and empires through their navies, while Florence's mercantile and woolen industries depended on the Arno for production and for transporting their goods abroad. In this regard, Siena is unique: despite having no adequate natural water supply and no water access to the sea, the people of Siena would go on to build one of the most prosperous and beautiful cities in Europe, creating one of the most successful republican governments of the Middle Ages, shaping the development of Renaissance art, and becoming one of Europe's great intellectual and cultural capitals.

At the same time, Siena *was* strategically located, and its location has been crucial to its wealth, vitality, and importance throughout its long history. This was true in the ancient world, with the city first developing as a trading and meeting hub in the middle of a triangle of three more important cities, namely, Arezzo, Chiusi, and Volterra, and then growing in significance in the Middle Ages, owing to its location along the commercially lucrative Via Francigena, which led pilgrims from all across Europe to Rome. At the same time, whatever its natural advantages, Siena's

natural features imposed several limitations on the city's size and power. Landlocked and surrounded on all sides by other cities and their armies, Siena could never become the ruler of Tuscany, never mind Italy, as it found itself in regular conflict with numerous powers at its shared borders. Moreover, with the Elsa and Ombrone rivers far removed from the city center and insufficient to support a large population and its industries, coupled with its lack of a seaport (at least until the fourteenth century), Siena lacked the requisite natural resources to become a great mercantile state, let alone an empire.

Yet the first peoples to lay a claim to the area did in fact choose the site for strategic reasons: sitting on an elevated ridge that rises above the surrounding countryside of southern Tuscany, the site upon which Siena was built gave its first settlers the high ground. Before the rise of Rome in the second half of first millennium BCE, the Italian peninsula of the ancient world was crowded with dozens of ethnically diverse warring tribes, each with its own language, customs, and cultural heritage. In such a violent environment, Siena's ridge offered its earliest inhabitants the ability to withstand almost any kind of invasion. In time, it allowed them to establish their dominion over the surrounding countryside. The first people to do so, based on the existing archaeological evidence, were the Etruscans, creators of a culturally advanced civilization that flourished in the first half of the first millennium BCE. Unfortunately, the Etruscans largely remain mysterious to us: despite the survival of some 5,000 Etruscan inscriptions, linguists still haven't been able to crack the code of their language. Yet based on the survival of elegant tombs, the inscriptions, and their accomplished artisanal wares, it is clear that society has flourished in this part of Italy for nearly 3,000 years. Though the evidence for Siena is meager, scholars agree that Etruscans were the first to build a citadel at the top of the highest hill in what would become Siena and used that citadel to subdue the surrounding countryside and to retreat when under attack. In the countryside, farmers worked the fertile land, turning the region into a major center of agricultural production. The area's steep hillsides were covered in vines and olive trees for those most precious and elemental of ancient products: wine and olive oil. In addition to serving as an Etruscan military post, the hilltop was almost certainly a site of religious importance, as well, as was the case in virtually all hilltop cities and towns in the ancient world. This most ancient part of Siena is still called *Castelveccchio*, meaning ancient citadel, and walking the area's quiet, steep, and ancient streets even today, one is transported to an earlier time when controlling the high ground was even more important than having convenient access to waterways and a water source.¹

Rome managed to conquer Etruria and the rest of the Italian peninsula in the third century BCE, though it would be a couple more centuries until the Romans would build much more than a military garrison in the area. In fact, the historical record for Roman Siena remains silent until the reign of Augustus. Following a series of bloody civil wars that left large parts of the peninsula depopulated and, more broadly, brought an end to the Roman republic, Augustus (ruled 27 BCE–14 CE) enacted a major building program to rebuild and repopulate numerous Roman colonies, including *Saena Julia*, as Roman Siena was called. Like all Roman cities,

Saena Julia had a forum for trade, temples for prayer, baths for recreation, and public fountains.² We don't know the exact site of the baths or fountains, so it is hard to judge the scale or sophistication of the Roman aqueducts without knowing how close to the elevated city center they lay. However, we can say with certainty that it was in Roman times when Siena first became a city, using slave labor to exploit the surrounding hills and their fertile land. In 90 CE, its citizens received Roman citizenship, and shortly thereafter, Siena begins to appear regularly in the written record, including in the writings of Pliny, Ptolemy, and Tacitus. In fact, the second-century Roman historian Tacitus provides us with our first glimpse of the Siennese people in a story he shares dating to the time of Vespasian. Tacitus recounts that a Roman senator visited Siena, expecting to be greeted as an honored guest. Instead, the Siennese satirically treated him to his own mock funeral, earning a reprimand from the Roman Senate for dishonoring one of its senators. If nothing else, this story suggests that already by the first century CE, Roman Siena had enough power and independence that its people could get away with this kind of irreverence as a form of political protest. At the same time, given that Tacitus' story of the mock funeral is our only snapshot that survives from Roman Siena, we can safely say that the city was never particularly important during the Golden Age of Rome, just a small Roman city on a hill, like so many others.

In fact, we know almost nothing about life in Siena until the second half of the seventh century CE, more than 500 years after Tacitus. The reason for this absence in the historical record is the decline and collapse of Roman authority in the West that coincided with destabilizing invasions by various Germanic tribes. Like so many other cities across the peninsula, Siena often found itself in the crosshairs of larger political and military conflicts, first between Romans and Germanic armies in the fifth century. The following century was even more devastating to the peninsula. The Byzantine emperor Justinian (d. 565) fought an ultimately doomed decades-long war to attempt to reconquer the western Mediterranean from the victorious Germanic tribes. During this chaotic, uncertain, and transitory period of Roman and then Germanic rule, urban inhabitants were often forced to flee to the countryside to engage in subsistence farming, as city populations collapsed owing to unreliable food supplies, a lack of public justice, and unmaintained aqueducts. Perhaps counterintuitively, the lack of any historical evidence from this period of Siennese history is, in itself, quite revealing. So complete is the silence in the written and archaeological records that it is possible that the invasions (by Visigoths, Vandals, Ostrogoths, and then Lombards) and wars led to the near collapse as well as the wholesale destruction of settlements in Roman Siena.

Lombard and Carolingian Siena

What we can say with certainty is that by the time evidence of life in Siena returned, in the second half of the seventh century, the population and its system of governance had changed radically. Most critically, the Lombards controlled the city and for the first time in its history, bishops became important players on the scene, a crucial

development in our ability to recover the city's history, owing to the written nature of medieval Catholic culture. The Lombards (or literally, the Longbeards, who were yet another fierce Germanic tribe) first invaded Italy in 568 and found quick success in establishing control over much of the peninsula, as the wars between Justinian's armies and the Ostrogoths had only recently concluded, leaving Italy decimated and its borders vulnerable. In fact, the only places where the Lombards did not find success were in those coastal cities that would have required a navy to control: the port towns of Ravenna, Genoa, and Venice to the north, and Bari, Tarento, Otranto, and Naples to the south. Rome's decline was particularly dramatic, with the population declining from a million in the time of Augustus to under 50,000 by the year 800 and the ancient monuments already by that time in a state of decay. Yet Rome maintained its independence from Germanic rule, thanks to the Roman Church's alliance with Constantinople and the religious authority that the popes claimed as the heirs to Rome's history, both its Christian and imperial past. Though it would take centuries before the papacy would become particularly powerful, it was during the time of Lombard rule in Italy when we first see the bishops of Rome (starting with Pope Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century) begin the process of centralizing their rule and convincing others that they held religious authority and even secular power over all of Christendom.

Where the Lombards did conquer, they were ruthless, and according to their own contemporaneous chronicler, they killed off the Roman ruling class, composed of both civic leaders and landowners, and made everyone else subject to their power, exacting a third of their produce as tribute. In the decades following their conquest, the Lombard kings settled in Pavia, located in the southern part of the province that, not coincidentally, is called Lombardy today. From there, they ruled through the support of two types of representatives, *gastalds* and dukes. While dukes tended to be given a greater amount of autonomy, *gastalds* were more explicitly connected to royal power and served at the pleasure of the Lombard king. *Gastalds* ruled across Tuscany, including in Siena.

Though the Lombards explicitly rejected a great deal of Rome's past, they did embrace one aspect of Roman rule: they governed from cities, many of which, as we have seen, had been largely depopulated if not abandoned. Such was the case in Siena, which the Lombards chose to make a cornerstone of their power in southern Tuscany. The reasons for their investment in Siena are obvious: Rome remained the only great international Christian city in the west, and from Siena, the Lombards could control much of the traffic heading to and from the eternal city. In fact, Siena's elevated location gave the Lombards control over a crucial portion of what was becoming the most important thoroughfare on the peninsula, the nascent *Via Francigena* that connected all of Europe with Rome.

The seventh century brought not only the return of secular power in Siena, in the form of *gastalds* of Lombard descent, but also the first evidence of episcopal authority in the city. While it is certainly possible that Siena was made a bishopric before this point, given that all of the other medieval Tuscan dioceses of any import

found themselves in a position that those Etruscans a millennium before had known only too well: attempting to carve out their own territory at the expense of neighboring powers.

In fact, the most famous incident in Siena's first thousand years of history, the city's prolonged conflict with Arezzo, was the result of exactly this issue: Siena's seventh- and early eighth-century bishops seeking to expand their territorial claims over their neighbors. More specifically, Bishop Maurus and his successors claimed that the diocese of Siena should match the (much larger) dominion of Siena's gastald. Siena's bishops claimed a great swath of land to the east comprising 18 parishes that had traditionally been under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Arezzo. At stake was not only theoretical spiritual authority but also larger matters of wealth



FIGURE 1.2 Via Francigena. Map of the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome. The oldest extant description of the Via Francigena, dating to the end of the tenth century, records each of the stops listed on this map

and power, in the form of control of the parishes, tithe collection, and the administration of church property. Matters between the two cities led to bloody conflict. The bishop of Arezzo was eventually forced to retreat, though the Siennese suffered the loss of one of their judges in the fight.

Not insignificantly, the land under dispute was believed to house the relics of that figure who during this time would become so central to Siennese memory: Ansano. As the tradition goes, during the time of the Emperor Diocletian, a young man named Ansano (ca. 284–304 CE) came to Siena to convert its people, only to be swept up in the Great Persecutions of the day and martyred in the Siennese countryside in 304 CE. In fact, Ansano's shrine at Dofana was located directly in the middle of the contested territory, and it was during this time within the context of the fight with Arezzo that the Siennese, judging from the surviving records, first began to venerate Ansano as their chief patron saint. Siena's bishops rooted their territorial claims in Ansano, whom they held up as Siena's first bishop and thus as their predecessor. Surviving sources indicate that in this fight between bishops that took place in 711, the "whole people of Siena" (*universus senensis populus*) stood united against Arezzo's bishop and demanded that Siena's bishop be given jurisdiction over the contested territory. The fact that the people themselves got involved in the matter suggests that already by that time, the larger population had shared interests connected to the land, and that they viewed their bishop as a legitimate ruler who could advance their cause. In addition, this conflict took place at a time when the relic trade was booming and pilgrims were increasingly flocking to Rome to visit its catacombs and the relics of its early saints. At a time when all cities and their bishops were scrambling for power, Ansano quite literally helped the bishops of Siena succeed in creating a valuable territory under the control of the decayed and depopulated urban center, located near the old citadel on the hill, in what was then the only part of the city that existed: Città. More broadly, Siena's control over Ansano's relics was part of a broader effort to ensure that the city became an essential stop for people traveling the Via Francigena on their way to Rome.

The death of Siena's chief judge and the retreat of Arezzo's bishop was just the beginning of a 500-year conflict between the two cities. A few years later, in 714, the Lombard king tried to resolve the issue by siding with Arezzo, as its diocese was older and its borders had traditionally extended right up to the city of Siena. Thus, he insisted the Siennese renounce the contested territory. But the Siennese refused to let the issue stand, viewing the territory as simply too valuable to their growing ambitions to cede. The conflict with Arezzo provides us with our first real glimpse into the medieval city: the period of Lombard rule had undeniably elevated the strategic importance of Siena, as the gateway to Rome to the south with easy access to areas of Lombard control in the north. The documents make clear that Lombard Siena was growing and that its inhabitants used whatever means available, including political and legal means, as well as appeals to Saint Ansano and even the explicit threat of violence, in their efforts to expand the city's influence and its control over the region. It was also during the Lombard era when the great monasteries of

the Siennese countryside, namely Santo Salvatore all'Amiata and Sant'Eugenio, still standing just a stone's throw from the city, first came to control significant territory, with the monks becoming powerful landlords and significant players in Siena's future.

In the second half of the eighth century, owing to the papacy's alliance with the Franks, the Lombards lost their grip on much of central and northern Italy. The Frankish-papal alliance, which led to the creation of the papal states in the 750s and the rise of the Carolingian dynasty, reshaped power dynamics throughout Europe and led to the return of emperors in the West, beginning with Charlemagne's coronation in the year 800. The rise of the Franks does not seem to have been traumatic for Siena, and if anything, Siena's import as a key stop on the Via Francigena only seems to have grown as a result. In fact, it was the Carolingians who founded the rich and powerful monastic community of Sant'Antimo on an ancient Roman settlement, strategically constructed in Siennese territory not far from the Via Francigena, adding to the appeal of the region for travelers. The Romanesque monastery can still be admired today, sitting as it does, in a lush green valley, a short distance from the vineyards of Montalcino that produce the finest of Tuscan wines, Brunello. Further evidence of Siena's elevated importance can be found in the efforts of one Carolingian count, named Adelrat, who in 833 attempted to create his own unified kingdom centered on Siena and comprising the territory of Florence, Arezzo, Volterra, Chiusi, and Arezzo. Though the effort ultimately failed, it points to the fact that the city's location made it increasingly attractive to the major political players in the region. In fact, even the emperor, Charles the Fat, visited the city in order to preside over a tribunal in 881.

But Siena's territory remained quite small, with the city facing growing cities at its borders as well as powerful family lineages, including most famously the Aldobrandeschi, who controlled large swaths of rural Tuscany and fought any and all advances. Beyond local threats, larger geopolitical struggles also had a negative impact on Siena. Most importantly, a series of wars in the second half of the ninth century between rival claimants over control of the Carolingian Empire led to a collapse of centralized power in Europe. This in turn left Europe's borders ungarded, leading to waves of invasions from all directions: from African and Spanish Muslim ships, Normans from Scandinavia, and Magyars from the Danube river basin. This broader political breakdown (which eventually led to the rise of the Ottonian dynasty, who made peace with the Magyars and ruled as emperors from Germany) affected power dynamics everywhere, including in Siena. Most importantly, the breakdown of political order made traveling throughout Europe more precarious and trade much harder to conduct.

Only those Italian cities on the coast (Venice, Pisa, and Genoa) managed to use the broader collapse of centralized states to their advantage. Inland cities like Siena struggled to maintain populations of only a few thousand owing to the numerous petty lords who had built castles on scores of hilltops across the southern Tuscan countryside in their efforts to establish dominion over as much territory as their manpower allowed. This period of time between 900 and 1100, was essentially

a society run by warlords. The same strategy employed by the Etruscans, of garrisoning the highest points of elevation and subduing the surroundings, once again applied. Feudal society was controlled by those powerful families, almost all of Germanic origin, who had exercised control over Italy's inland cities ever since the conquest by the Lombards. These feudal lords took the title count and used titles and nominal support from an overlord to raise their own armies and use force and negotiation to control the rural peasantry.

Siena, atop its elevated ridge, managed to weather the collapse of Carolingian society fairly well. Given that the city could not be besieged, trade and travel continued, if less consistently, through Siena on the relatively protected Via Francigena. But the post-Carolingian period did usher in a fundamental shift of power away from the city. The collapse of centralized power led the most powerful families of the age, composed of those families who had traditionally served as counts and urban leaders, to flee to the countryside and fight there for dominion. All of Siena's most important families, including the Berardenghi, Scialenghi, Guiglieschi, and Ardengheschi, built castles, waged war, and fought for domination in the Sienese countryside during this time. Under such a haphazard "system" of localized rule, residents were forced to make tribute payments for every kind of service. There were fees for using ovens and mills, as well as fees simply for traveling through someone else's territory. Those who couldn't pay were forced to work within the territory, either on the land or on the upkeep of infrastructure, including the massive labor-intensive defensive walls that by necessity surrounded all centers of population, including entire cities like Siena. The most important buildings constructed during this time were the scores of castles across Tuscany, as well as numerous religious institutions. The Berardenghi, in addition to renovating a convent on their land around the year 1000 over which they controlled the right to elect its abbess, built dozens of castles in the Chianti region, along the Ombrone River. The Ardengeschi did something of a similar sort in the region of the Merse River in southern Tuscany where they built dozens of castles as well as an abbey.

The biggest beneficiaries in the shift in the center of power from cities to the countryside were bishops. In many of Rome's leading cities, bishops had first become important urban leaders back in the fourth century (St. Ambrose and St. Augustine being the two most famous examples), but as we've seen, despite its claims regarding Ansano, Siena only became a diocese in the seventh century, and for the next couple centuries, the city's counts exercised far greater influence on the town than its bishops. It was only in the tenth century, as control of the countryside through castles became the most secure form of wealth and power, that Siena's bishops first managed to become formidable urban leaders. Not to overstate the case: the urban center remained modest in size in this century, and episcopal power had its limits. But still, as the head of a growing administration of increasingly literate clerics and in possession of powerful spiritual weapons, including excommunication and interdict through which they could compel obedience by the populace, bishops came to occupy a leading role in shaping Sienese society. Their power and wealth at this time rested in the spiritual authority of their office and the rights it



FIGURE 1.3 Berardenga Abbey. The noble Berardenga family of Siena established this abbey during the ninth century

granted them, as they claimed the right to collect tithes from the entire population and controlled access to the sacraments (which they claimed were essential to salvation). They were also responsible for settling public disputes between rival families or factions. Only the person of the bishop, the leading religious figure in the diocese, had the authority and trust of the people to settle the most pressing issues of the day. Siena's medieval bishops oversaw public works projects, offered justice in their courts, and helped decide matters of war and peace. Though never particularly vast in size, Siena's *vescovado*, the land owned and controlled by the bishop, included the fortified properties at Murlo and Montepescini, and it was an important additional source of a bishop's income and power. In 911, Siena's bishop consecrated a new church dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the hill of Città, the name given to the part of Sienese territory considered the "city." This new church served as a visible symbol of increasing episcopal influence during the tenth century.

We have briefly traced the development of Siena from the earliest archaeological record up to the eleventh century. From the time of the Etruscans, Siena's evolution was marked by a few characteristics. First of all, it both benefited from and was limited by its location: high on a ridge in the middle of the peninsula's most important trade route, Siena was destined to become an international hub of sorts. Secondly, Siena's early history illustrates just how interconnected the Mediterranean world was. Urban matters like employment and food security were dependent on networks of trade and stable control over the countryside. In other

words, Siena's fortunes rose and fell according to matters well beyond its control. This was as true in the Etruscan age as it was in the Roman and Lombard periods that followed. With the fall of Rome, Siena's character changed, owing to two important developments: the Germanic conquests and the growing power of Catholic institutions. The Lombards and Franks brought with them ideas of nobility and justice rooted in their Germanic heritage that they ultimately used to exercise their control over the Siennese countryside in the feudal age, leaving the bishop *de facto* in control of the city. The rise of episcopal power in public affairs marks the other crucial development of the medieval age.

Two further developments are illustrative of Siena during this era. Tradition suggests as early as 898 CE, the Siennese opened the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala to accommodate poor and sick people, in addition to pilgrims traveling through Siena on their way to and from Rome. In fact, by the eleventh century, if not before, pilgrims were warmly writing about their time spent in *Siena Vetus*, the city "of the beautiful ladies," on their way to Rome. The crusades, which began in 1095, opened the floodgates for travel throughout Europe, especially on the *Via Francigena*, as many crusaders passed through Siena on their way to the ports in Puglia to depart for the Holy Land. By 1100, not only were Pisa, Genoa, and Venice all ascendant, owing to the West's victory in the first crusade and the subsequent colonies that were established in the eastern Mediterranean, but so too was Siena, its merchants, and Santa Maria della Scala, all beneficiaries of this new era of travel, economic opportunity, and religious zeal.

The second development that exemplifies the character of Siena during this era involves, perhaps not surprisingly, the fight with Arezzo over their patron saint, Sant'Ansano. In 1108, more than 400 years into the struggle, the Siennese moved the body of the martyr from Dòfana to Siena. No longer content just to be players in someone else's history, the Siennese were ready to become the protagonists of their own story. The following decades find them organizing a civic government led by consuls and raising a civic militia. Soon the Siennese would be fighting for their collective good. In 1125, the people of Siena began to elect consuls who would aid the bishop in governing the city. In that year, we hear of one of the first Siennese consuls, Macone, imploring the Siennese not to take back the long-contested territory from Arezzo. The development of republican government and the affair with Arezzo reflect Siena's ambition and determination at the time. These characteristics would serve the Siennese in the coming centuries, beginning in earnest in the twelfth century, a century of trade, growth, crusade; one that witnessed the rise of communal governments across Italy and the conquest of the countryside by those communal governments. It is to this history of the communal age that we now turn our attention.

Notes

- 1 The archeological evidence is meager: a mysterious site known as the Poggio di Siena Vecchia (Hill of Old Siena), a couple old roads located near the present-day cathedral, and some recently discovered remains underneath the cathedral.

18 From the origins of Siena to the fall of the Siennese Republic

- 2 We know of the fountains thanks to a fourth-century laudatory epigraphy, which thanks an anonymous Roman aristocrat for having restored some of Siena's public fountains.

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2

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE FORMATION OF THE SIENESE STATE (1000–1260)

The rise of Siena

What gives a city its unique character? What makes its people different from the people anywhere else? The history of Siena, particularly during the period of time covered in this chapter, can provide insightful answers to these questions. For it was during this time that the small city on a hill became identifiably Sienese: politically, religiously, culturally, and economically. Politically, its people embraced an increasingly republican system of representative government that gave hundreds of citizens some say in civic affairs. Culturally and religiously, their collective imagination helped them dream big in constructing their self-image as a special city, as it was during this time that the Virgin Mary eclipsed the local saint, Ansano, as Siena's chief protector and patron saint. During these years, the Sienese came to build their civic holidays, rituals, cathedral, and collective identity around her cult. The city's population and architectural footprint expanded dramatically, and the city succeeded in conquering or making peace with the great feudal lineages, bringing the Sienese *contado* firmly under its control. And owing to the crusades and the consequent return of Mediterranean-wide trade, Siena's economy boomed. The city's streets filled with soldiers on their way to the Holy Land, pilgrims traveling on the Via Francigena, bankers who were aggressively courting popes and cardinals alike, peasant women carrying water from the fountains outside the city up to the city center, and beasts hauling stones to the myriad construction projects underway across the city.

In short, in less than 150 years, the Sienese managed to create a culturally unified, politically stable, prosperous state, despite the city's lack of access to a significant water source. This chapter connects Siena's growth, dynamism, and prosperity to the broader Mediterranean context that helped make Siena's rise possible. In fact, as we will see, Siena's rise was very much the product of a confluence of developments

that affected all Europeans, factors including the Gregorian Reform movement, the Crusades, the creation of new trade routes and increased travel, agricultural innovations, the opening of markets, and the development of a money economy: all of these factors contributed to a period of prosperity, stability, and material gain unseen in the western Mediterranean world since the days of Rome, and Siena was one of the greatest beneficiaries of these developments. In fact, as we will see, it was in this time period that Siena first began to blossom in the ways that would make it famous.

The late eleventh and early twelfth centuries were a remarkably consequential time in European history. In the 1050s, following an embarrassing string of corrupt popes guilty of such sins as adultery, sodomy, heresy, and murder, never mind such lesser but still egregious sins of nepotism and simony, the papacy began a series of radical reform efforts, commonly known as the Gregorian Reform movement, so named after Pope Gregory VII. One of the first and most consequential reforms was the creation of the College of Cardinals. By tradition, popes were supposed to be elected by the Roman people via public acclamation, a process that proved only too easy to corrupt. The College of Cardinals was given the power to elect new popes but still felt it necessary to meet outside of Rome in 1058, following the death of Pope Leo IX, in an effort to keep rich Roman feudal families from corrupting the electoral process. They chose to meet in Siena, which suggests that the city was seen by contemporaries as safe and secure, accessible from Rome while also being far enough away as to avoid interference from Roman elites. The bishop of Florence, Gérard de Bourgogne, was elected pope at the council, choosing the name Nicholas II.

While the papal reform movement was not particularly successful in limiting the control and abuse of Church offices by elite families, it was enormously consequential in other ways. First of all, it allowed popes to dramatically expand their authority over all Christians in Europe, which led to greater liturgical uniformity for all European Catholics, but even more importantly, it allowed the popes to become, in time, the political leaders of Europe, capable of uniting Europeans regardless of nationality, through a vast papal bureaucracy and the use of spiritual weapons such as excommunication and interdict. Almost immediately, the efforts of papal reformers to elevate the religious authority and the political power of the popes led to conflict with the German emperors of the day. Known today as the Investiture Controversy, the struggle for supremacy between popes and emperors was far more than just a theoretical dispute over the proper relationship between church and state. Instead, the dispute got to the very heart of the nature of legitimacy and authority: from where or from whom does power come from? What can be done if a ruler is unjust? Who has the power to appoint and depose secular or religious leaders? These were just some of the questions that were debated during the Investiture Controversy, and for the cities of northern Italy, including Siena, the dispute provided an opportunity. As we will see later in this chapter, by the 1180s, Siena, along with many other cities in northern Italy, were able to leverage their allegiance in the church-state fight in order to gain their political independence.



FIGURE 2.1 The cloisters of the Romanesque church of San Cristoforo, located in Piazza Tolomei. The church was the site of city council meetings for much of the thirteenth century. Though the church was partly rebuilt following an earthquake in 1798, the cloisters (pictured here) are original and date to the twelfth century

The rise of papal power was also responsible for the crusading movement. Quite simply, in the year 1000, popes lacked the authority and bureaucracy to mobilize a large army, and no king or emperor was powerful enough to compel other kings to fight in overseas battles together. Yet when Urban II called the first Crusade in 1095, his authority and organizational reach was so vast that he was able to convince and compel hundreds of thousands of European Christians to journey to the East, through promises of earthly treasure, prestige, and eternal salvation. People went on crusade for a mix of religious, financial, and social reasons, but whatever their motivations, those who went, including both men and women (who went along on pilgrimage, or worked as washers, prostitutes, and nurses), managed to capture Jerusalem and reestablish Mediterranean-wide trade routes for the first time since the establishment of the first Muslim dynasties some 400 years before.

The effect of the establishment of the crusader states in the twelfth century was enormously beneficial to Europeans everywhere, and to the Sienese, especially. Perhaps most importantly, for Europe's ruling class, the Crusades helped solve the problem that had plagued Europe since the fall of Rome: the intractable problem of violence. For centuries, the problem had only grown worse, particularly following the ninth-century breakdown of centralized power and the invasions that followed. With the development of castles, localized violence had

proven to be intractable and matters of justice rarely extended beyond the castle. The knightly class controlled society through raw power, and the most violent and ruthless tended to be the most successful. On a basic level, there truly were few economic options for people to pursue, assuming they even had the means to do so. Historians often talk about feudal society as consisting of three classes: those who fight, those who work, and those who pray. In reality, there were always some craftsmen and artisans in all population centers, yet the idea of the three orders helps us understand the limits of the feudal economy. With knights controlling the countryside, too often, dozens of petty lords might control parts of a trade route, rendering long-distance trade extraordinarily difficult and dangerous. With trade limited, knights were incentivized to seek wealth through additional conquest and the further subjection of the working class, which at the time comprised almost exclusively peasant farmers.

But the Crusades changed all this. For the first time since Charlemagne, who had expanded Europe's orders significantly to the north through the conquest of the Saxons, knights had opportunities to obtain wealth without it by necessity coming at the expense of their fellow Europeans. With the Crusades offering some relief from the violence in Europe and spurring significant amounts of travel and trade on their own, the European economy improved, and aided by agricultural and technological innovations as well, the twelfth century witnessed prosperity, growth, and building not seen in Europe since the days of Rome.

Siena, in particular, benefited from the crusades. The subsequent decrease in violence throughout Europe as well as the new trade routes that the crusades had made possible, led to increased opportunities for Sienese men of means, many of whom became international merchants involved in the spice trade. Not only did the Crusades open up new trade routes in the East for Sienese merchants, but also with violence diminished, roads safer, and ports newly constructed or restored (such as at Grosseto), ambitious Sienese families established important businesses with offices all across Europe. Another upside of safer roads and increased travel could be seen in the explosion of trade in the city. Siena lay close to the intersection of the salt and iron roads that went inland from the sea, making it a natural center of trade for all kinds of goods. These roads also saw the seasonal movement of herds that sought more temperate climates and to flee from the harshness of the Mugello and Casentino areas in the Sienese countryside.

Even more important for Siena's economic growth was the flood of pilgrims and merchants who passed through the city. More than just a religious experience, pilgrimage offered people novelty and adventure. Pilgrimage was the tourism of the Middle Ages, and the Sienese catered their businesses, urban development, and even their religious devotion to meet travelers' demands. Siena had plenty to offer its visitors, with dozens of hotels, hostels, and hospitals stretched across the sprawling district of Camollia, with its main thoroughfare situated on a flat stretch of land extending to the north of the city center. Even more crucially, the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala offered pilgrims lodging right across from Siena's cathedral, which itself was at the beginning of numerous remodel and expansion projects.

Over the course of the twelfth century, Siena became a place of opportunity, offering anyone with a skill (and plenty of people without) a chance to make a living and to take part in something extraordinary: building a new city. Barbers, butchers, bakers, cobblers, and smiths as well as artisanal craftsmen all established businesses and plied their respective trades within the city walls. Sienese workers formed guilds aimed at providing stability for employees and ensuring that those practicing a trade in the city were competent and could be trusted. Over the course of the twelfth century, Siena went from being a small city on a hill to one of the leading cities in Italy, with its population doubling to 20,000 by the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Such growth was unprecedented in Europe for a city with only a few streamlets and no significant water source. The closest public fountains in the twelfth century were still outside the city walls, compelling the Sienese to diligently collect rainwater and to gather it from small underground aquifers. As Siena's population grew, its twelfth-century leaders scrambled to find ways to overcome Siena's fundamental limitation. Beyond Siena's insatiable drive for a sufficient water supply, all of this urban growth forced twelfth-century Siena to find ways to procure sufficient foodstuffs to feed its population. Such concerns led Sienese elites, which at this time consisted of the city's bishop and powerful heads of families who essentially ran large corporations consisting of hundreds of family members and other employees, to make every effort to extend Siena's territorial dominion through whatever means possible. To secure the needed foodstuffs, the Sienese reduced the scores of castles in the countryside to servitude, using various means to do so, including warfare, payment, alliances with local communities, and the conversion of castle holders into public officers known as castellans. Often rural peasant communities welcomed Sienese intervention in their disputes with local landlords, viewing the Sienese as more amenable to their demands than the typical feudal lord might be, or at least less arbitrary in their administration of justice and collection of taxes. In addition to these efforts at consolidating power within the countryside bordering the city, the Sienese also began to stake their claims to territory in the direction of Val d'Elsa in the north, toward Chiusi and the Monte Amiata region in the south, and east toward the sea. By 1200, the Sienese had come to control much of southern Tuscany, procuring enough foodstuffs to feed an ever-growing population.

Another major development in twelfth-century Siena was the elevation of the cult of the Virgin. In fact, Mary's cult was on the rise across all of Europe, as she came to signify mercy, compassion, and generosity at a time of rising inequality in cities. Certainly, the Sienese were not the only ones to claim a certain affinity to the Virgin; one finds other examples even in Tuscany, with Lucca also claiming the Virgin Mary as its patron saint and Florence dedicating its cathedral to her in the fourteenth century. Yet from the twelfth century onward, the Sienese were the most successful in staking their claim to the Virgin Mary.

Already by the twelfth century, the Feast of the Assumption on August 15 had become Siena's most important civic holiday. Sienese officials used the occasion to



FIGURE 2.2 Dating to the time of the Lombards, the Abbey of San Salvatore at Mont Amiata flourished thanks to imperial support in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The original crypt (seen here) can still be visited

strengthen the fealty of its citizens and to demonstrate its dominion over the *contado*, a term used in medieval documents to refer to the surrounding countryside under the control of the city. On the eve of the feast day (August 14), those rural communities under Sienese jurisdiction were required to take part in a procession to the Sienese cathedral with a large candle of a specified weight, a form of taxation imposed by the Sienese. Yet the ceremonies served a far greater function than just tax collection: by requiring that every community take part in the ceremonies and send representatives to the cathedral and solemnly place the candles before the high altar, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Sienese managed to connect patriotism and religious fervor to the act of obeying the governing elite. In fact, on the feast day itself, Sienese citizens, too, were required to come to the cathedral with their fellow parishioners and offer candles to the Virgin Mary. These solemn processions were capped with a special mass, open markets, feasts, and the running of a horse race from a gate of the city to the Duomo.

The candles collected for the Feast of the Assumption were used to light the cathedral during the year. The surplus of offerings helped fund the construction of Siena's cathedral, which was just beginning to take shape in the years around 1200. While Siena's bishops had served as important authority figures in the city up to this time, the rise of an increasingly powerful and wealthy citizenry changed the dynamics of urban power. Even the bishop's church, the Duomo, came to be considered property of Siena's faithful. In time, the laity came to be responsible

for funding its construction, and decisions on the cathedral project increasingly rested with civic officials. This shift from ecclesiastical to lay control of the cathedral was common in many Italian cities of the age and reflects the central role that religious identity, ecclesiastical institutions, and monumental construction played in the creation of a civic identity and local patriotism. Of course, as we will see in the chapters ahead, the Siennese cathedral would continue to be expanded and decorated for centuries to come.

While all this development suggests that the Siennese were increasingly in charge of their own destiny, the city's fate remained inextricably linked to the great international struggle of the age, namely the great battle between the papacy and the emperor. With two of the great powers in Siennese territory, namely the Aldobrandeschi family and the Abbey of Monte Amiata, both aligned with the empire and the emperor desperate for allies against the Lombard league, Siena found itself with little choice but to align with the emperor, especially when Florence joined the papal side. In 1168, matters came to a head when Siena's consuls threatened to hold hostage any clerics who sided with the papacy instead of the emperor, which forced the city's own chief ecclesiastical prelate to flee the city. The fact that the pope at the time, Pope Alexander III, was a Siennese man from the Bandinelli family did nothing to ease the tension, illustrating that the struggle was far bigger than any one person or one city.

Moreover, the Siennese gained concrete advantages through their alliance with the emperor. When the Siennese sent troops against Milan in 1167, the emperor granted the Siennese the right to prohibit the construction of castles within a few miles of the city, which was crucial to Siena's ability to subdue the countryside and create a strong, unified state. Siena was also granted permission to destroy existing castles, such as the great castle that once belonged to the Ardengheschi, which sat at the mouth of the Merse Valley, leading toward Grosseto and west to the sea. By destroying this castle, the Siennese gained control of an artery that would in time become politically, militarily, and economically important. In 1168, the Siennese came to control a place called Asciano, located toward the Chiana Valley (near the site where in the early fourteenth century, monks and laborers would construct the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore), on the hills that overlook the beautiful clay plain. A document dating from that year (1168) provides our first glimpse into Siena's institutional development over the course of the twelfth century. The document, which references Saint Ansano's relics as belonging to the people of Siena, makes reference to Siena's *universitas*, its six consuls, and Siena's two Provveditori di Biccherna, officials who controlled the city's finances. From this we can comfortably say that the Siennese had adopted a cooperative system of government in which the various sources of power, comprising hundreds of families all vying for power, had all largely agreed to work together to form a republic. They created legislation and held council meetings where they debated matters of civic importance such as the ever-growing need for new and better aqueducts, the defense of the city, and joint military ventures. With ancient Rome as their model, Siena's city leaders called themselves consuls and imagined themselves to be living through a new age.

In many ways they were. The Siennese constructed monumental new buildings everywhere in the city and built hundreds of new apartment buildings to house the growing population.

Much of this growth was the result of Siena's alliance with the German emperor, which had given the citizenry the authority and means through which to subdue the countryside, as when the head chancellor of the empire granted the Siennese formal authority over the entire *contado*, the citizen gates, and the imperial center of San Quirico in 1180. Upon gaining control over the *contado*, the Siennese had made the first step in becoming a formidable and influential city. While the Siennese certainly benefited from imperial support, their alliance with the empire was not without its pitfalls. In the famous battle of Legnano in 1176, for example, imperial forces, led by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, were handily defeated by the Lombard League. Siena's allegiance to the empire at Legnano cost the Siennese important territory, as they were forced to accept a disadvantageous restructuring of its border in Chianti, toward Florence. Despite such losses, overall, Siena benefited from the alliance, even if its success remained largely tied to the fate of the empire and the Ghibelline party.

In these same years while the Siennese were establishing their republic, silver was discovered in the hills of the Metallifere, located near Massa Marittima. As a result, mines were established in the area, at Batignano and Montorsaio (between 1178 and 1179), and the empire granted the Siennese the castle of Montieri, giving the Siennese control of the local mines. Siennese merchants as well as the Siennese church quickly sought to use the mines to turn Siena into a financial powerhouse. It is right around this time, likely in the 1180s, that Siena began minting its own currency, again with imperial permission.¹ While thousands of similar documents of the sort have been lost, the chance survival of a document of 1198 speaks of Siennese merchants loaning the bishop of Utrecht approximately 1,250 silver marks. This enormous sum gives some insight into the wealth of Siennese elites and makes clear that despite the natural limitations of Siennese territory, Siena's elites had plenty of ways to make money through loans and trade.

The fact that this loan to the bishop of Utrecht was created in Rome with the support of the papacy suggests that the church-state conflict of the age did not prevent the Siennese from conducting business with church officials. Likewise, Siena's political alliance with the empire was also not an obstacle to the city's banking business. After all, the empire realized how important banking was to development across Europe. Thus, the Angiolieri family was able to amass great wealth in their role as papal bankers. The Angiolieri, just like every other Siennese family who managed to obtain great wealth during this time, funneled their wealth into the construction of ever more impressive family palaces in the heart of the city.

The influx of wealth into Siena helped foster opportunity and cultural development in the twelfth-century city. Certainly, the ascension of a Siennese to the papacy with Alexander III reflects this, but so too does the fact that during this period, powerful Siennese judges and notaries helped shape the development of European law. The survival of a liturgical calendar of sorts, the *Ordo ecclesie Senensis*

from 1215, makes clear that by the early thirteenth century (and likely before), the local bishopric had developed a sophisticated institutional structure. The document also makes clear that the local church played a crucial role in educating not just the clergy but also many members of the laity as well. As was common in leading cities across Europe, local merchants utilized the clergy's knowledge to learn the skills they needed to navigate the complex world of international trade and banking.

By the early thirteenth century, we find men of Siennese origin in key positions within the Roman curia, while Siena's bankers had begun to serve as *campsores domini papae* – the bankers of the papacy. This was especially true following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 where the Siennese had developed a reputation for their tenacity in procuring offerings for Saint Peter from the reluctant heads of the churches and abbeys of all Europe. The collection of those “donations” and their transfer to Rome was essential to the papacy's institutional growth and power, and for Siennese merchants, it became an extremely profitable business venture. In fact, Siena's Bonsignori family established the Gran Tavolo in the early thirteenth century and quickly became the age's most important banking society.

The economic boom of the early thirteenth century

All of these factors helped shape Siennese development and the city's thirteenth-century economic explosion: their advantageous alliance with the empire; the benefits of an ever-expanding political hegemony over southern Tuscany; an increasingly educated clergy and merchant class, as well as highly trained artisans and craftsmen; a steady flow of pilgrims who visited Siena on their way to Rome or on pilgrimage to the East, spending money on food, wares, and lodging, and in the process sustaining the livelihoods of thousands of Siennese artisans, hoteliers, and merchants, and helping launch Siena's burgeoning banking industry. This was the environment in which the thirteenth-century Siennese moved to the forefront of European politics, culture, and law, aided in part by Siena's nascent university, which had been established with the support of the commune in 1240.

People everywhere were affected by these changes, as roads became safer, trade less risky, and travel more common. Siennese merchants were among the greatest beneficiaries of the new economic and cultural opportunities. The city's merchants established connections in the key international markets of Champagne, Brie, and Flanders, which were by this time all accessible by sea. Siena merchants transported raw materials, such as precious English wool from Northern Europe to southern Italy and beyond for production. It was a virtuous cycle: as trade became easier, goods became cheaper, even as demand rose, leading to ever greater growth. The growth of cities and increased trade created a fertile environment for cultural exchange. The new professional classes of judges, notaries, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, bankers, and merchants were mobile, conducting business throughout Europe, the broader Mediterranean, and with Marco Polo and others, to Crimea and even China.

To those who lived through this rapid development of trade, banking, and industry, it often felt that the entire nature of society was changing. Talented, skilled, or ambitious workers suddenly had ways to advance their standing in society. For some, such as Dante, writing a century later, the societal transformation wrought by the rise of cities, the growth of trade, and a burgeoning money economy upended traditional values of honor, family, and loyalty. Of course, such changes made Dante's career, and his masterwork, the *Divine Comedy*, possible.² But the greatest dissatisfaction of the age was rooted in the underlying fact that despite all the advances within society, human suffering, inequality, and societal injustices remained as severe and chronic as ever. The Franciscan movement (founded 1210), and other groups including the Waldensians (from 1180), created new forms of religious community in their efforts to address the injustices of their day. Both groups were started by merchants who renounced their wealth and embraced a radical and impoverished experience as a response to the staggering inequality and unchristian nature of the powerful world of banking, trade, and business. Christian theologians in Paris contested and debated the legitimacy of the new sources of profit, particularly the use of money to produce more money without benefiting society in the process, as well as the proper relationship between wealth and morality.

Just as dramatic as changing cultural values was the transformation of urban landscapes in cities across northern Italy, as rich families constructed their own urban centers of power and cities and invested in public works, churches, and government buildings. By simply looking at a map of Siena's thirteenth-century urban fortresses, one can immediately grasp how power functioned: power was local, as families fought for control over neighborhoods, districts, and ultimately, the city itself. Building castle-palaces was the duty of wealthy, private individuals, and families aimed to build urban castles strong enough to withstand attacks from enemies. The power of Siena's leading families extended to the neighboring properties they owned and controlled, which might serve as apartments, shops, and centers of production for hundreds of individuals, all of whom owed them either loyalty or rent (or both). The Malavolti family's fortress and vast properties on the Via Camollia provide one example of this, while the Tolomei family palace in Piazza Tolomei provides another. Both families benefited from their control of a section of the Via Francigena and from the pilgrims and merchants who flooded Siena's streets.³ All told, evidence from dozens of these fortresses survives in Siena, demonstrating the extent to which urban power was centered on these castle-like family fortresses, each of which had a tower from which these families could terrorize and control anyone living on neighboring streets.

If the construction of urban fortresses symbolized urban power, their destruction represented family impotence: if a family dishonored Siena, whether it be through treachery or failure, it risked the physical destruction of its urban presence. Siena blamed its defeat by Florence in 1269 on their leader, Provenzano Salvani, and as a consequence, destroyed the Salvani palace. In the same years, the Sienese also partially leveled the Tolomei family castle. Much later, in 1423, they confiscated the Salimbeni fortress, the large complex that now houses the Monte dei Paschi.⁴ Each of these examples illuminates how the city fought back against those families who sought to undermine communal power.

Merchant noble families, including the Salvani, Malavolti, Salimbeni, and dozens of others, were largely responsible for shaping the city's path in the early decades of the thirteenth century, with leading men serving as consuls of the city, and using diplomacy, force, and their wealth to further their personal and familial ambitions. While this type of domination by the noble class was characteristic of other Italian cities of the age as well, the situation in Siena was unusual, as no Siennese family would ever manage to establish its dominion over the city. Instead, Siena integrated the nobility into the city, procuring for itself a military element that very much explains its political might as well as its aggressive expansion and systematic domination of the countryside.

Retracing the original city walls of Castelveccchio today is a reminder of how small Siena once was, making its twelfth- and thirteenth-century expansion all the more dramatic and impressive. In terms of how the city was settled, the wealthiest families, bankers, and the city's merchants settled the most advantageous lands, choosing those that were centrally located in the heart of the city and along the Via Francigena. As the city grew, development continued downward and outward, away from the city center. Because of its central location and because it remained unsettled and thus more easily converted into public space, the largest share of public investment in new construction was devoted to building in the area around the Campo. While much of the building expansion of the city occurred organically, it is also clear that the Siennese understood the importance of urban planning. For instance, around 1200 the Siennese designed a regulatory plan for the *terzo* of San Martino, which was only then coming to be well populated.⁵ City walls required collective action for the collective security of the population, and thus, funding the walls was the most important public works project of the commune, other than securing a water source. Thirteenth-century records from the city's financial office of the Biccherna testify to the skyrocketing costs and the enormous amount of human labor required for building, expanding, and maintaining the city walls.

Along with the walls, public fountains were the other chief concern of city leaders. While the original settlement had survived on collected rainwater and by carrying water from a distance, as the city expanded, so did its water needs. It fell to the city's leaders, its engineers, and its masons to develop a solution. Touring the water fountains and the underground *bottini* today reveals the challenges faced by the twelfth-century city and its people's tremendous achievements during those years. The city's oldest fountains exist far from the urban center at low elevations. But through unprecedented financial investment, clever planning, and great human effort, the Siennese managed to create an impressive underground system of aqueducts that funneled to ever more centrally located fountains, including the city's three major fountains, Pescaia, Porta Ovile, and Fontebranda, as well as numerous smaller ones, including Fontanella, Vetrice, and Fontegiusta. Though urban growth would continue largely unabated for another century and a half, already by 1200 the Siennese had come together to meet the two greatest threats to their collective security through the construction of the walls and public fountains.

The arrival of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century also played an important role in shaping the development of the city. The Franciscans and the Dominicans built their enormous churches outside the city walls beginning in the 1220s on land donated by wealthy Siennese families, and by the end of the century, the Servites and Carmelites had constructed their own large churches as well. Wealthy Siennese families and their banks forged relationships with these religious communities and helped fund the construction of their churches, even as the mendicants preached against usury. Siennese men joined the ranks of these new religious orders, each of which was centered on addressing the profound anxieties and injustices found everywhere in urban life, from the greed of merchants and bankers and the violence of mercenaries, to the incompatibility of wealth and the message of the gospels, or the visible social and economic inequality found on the streets of every medieval city. And yet, despite the difficulty of urban life for the majority, Siena remained an attractive center of hope and opportunity for migrants who flooded in from the countryside.

Siena was a city that tolerated and accepted migrants looking for employment. Workers were always needed who could transport supplies, from stone to soil and wood, or aid in the construction of the aqueducts, the fountains, the city walls, the city's churches, or new defenses built throughout Siennese territory. Siena's workers, including many who had worked the neighboring fields, built the imposing garrison of Monteriggioni in the early thirteenth century in the city's efforts to fortify the border and defense against Florence.⁶

One unintended consequence of this urban influx was that it provided rural residents with a much stronger position from which to negotiate terms with their lords. As a result, in places in the Siennese countryside like Trequanda, Montisi, and Tintinnano (today, Rocca d'Orcia), inhabitants managed to secure certain rights, including the right to reject any unreasonable request for their services. Lords could no longer dispense justice arbitrarily, as they risked rebellion: after all, for the first



FIGURE 2.3 The Siennese built the impressive garrison of Monteriggioni and its 14 towers during the years 1213–19. Monteriggioni incurred damage from Florentine aggression but was restored in the second half of the thirteenth century

time, people living in rural Siena had the option of abandoning the fields to take their chances in the city.

One particularly important region in the Sienese *contado* during this time period was Montagnola, a small mountain near Siena that was home to dozens of populous villages, only traces of which can still be seen today. The best evidence of the region's previous prosperity can be found in the small churches that still dot the area and within which can still be found important artistic surprises by Duccio and other Sienese masters. One important source of economic development in this area beginning in the twelfth century came from Siena's growth and the city's need for new building materials. After all, Siena could no longer satisfy itself with the expensive rocky "bulges" that were used to fortify the walls and the towers of powerful families. Instead, inhabitants of the villages in Montagnola fashioned bricks and transported them to make extra money and help meet the needs of the expanding city. In time, these bricks were used not just in urban palaces but in the countryside as well, providing employment for Siena's rural inhabitants.

The chance survival of a late twelfth-century judicial document from this mountainous area near the city sheds light on how the growth of urban life affected traditional values and relationships. In the document, a church authority complains that a servant is guilty of acting as if he were free! In the world of rural servitude, of families united to the *mansi* as if they were material elements, often given over to buyers like livestock, such a belief in one's right to certain freedoms amounted to a sea change in societal values. Thanks to the lure of the city, which symbolized freedom for many would-be immigrants, the countryside was opening itself up to contractual relationships that were free, between men who were free. The ancient, long-standing relationships, based in traditional customs and respected before as the "natural" order of things, were abandoned since there were not written laws on these matters.

In time, the influx of people became so sizable, in fact, that the commune of Siena felt compelled to contain it, in order to protect the interests of small farm owners and to keep the workforce from completely abandoning the countryside. Still, the rural world of the parish churches that studded the countryside a few kilometers from Siena, like the delightful structures of Rofeno, Pievesciata, Ponte allo Spino, and Radi, were neglected in the aftermath of massive emigration. The once powerful castles in the area also lost their importance, since these areas were now incorporated into the political and military sphere of the city. The traditional *mansi*, that is, those rented properties that had been dependent on the castles and their lords, were converted into civic property, under the control of either old urbanized nobles, or the nouveau riche of the city. This liberalization brought about the entrance of new capital that allowed sharecropping to flourish.

Sharecropping was a new method of doing business rooted in a contract limited to just a few years, which greatly mobilized agricultural production. It was a sort of precapitalist agrarian system that flanked the commercial and financial sector within which Siena was excelling. In the oldest of Siena's preserved laws, from 1208, sharecroppers are already spoken of as a social category, obligated to pay a

special tax in order to contribute for one of Siena's battles against Florence. Far from being a relic of rural Siena's distant past, this type of sharecropping contract continued to shape the lives of rural Sienese until the middle of the twentieth century. Tuscan sharecropping was even responsible for the distinct appearance of the Tuscan landscape. As we will see, sharecropping did not spread everywhere in Sienese territory, but where it did spread, it permanently transformed the land in places that include San Gimignano, Chianciano, Montepulciano, and Monticchiello, just to name a few.

The growth of the Sienese state

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Siena was at the pinnacle of its development. For reasons tied to its traditional alliances and in order to protect itself against Florence, Siena had placed itself under the Holy Roman Emperor's sphere of influence. At this time, the empire was controlled by Frederick II, who famously held the titles of Holy Roman Emperor, King of Sicily, and King of Jerusalem simultaneously, extending the territory under the control of the empire in all directions while creating an effective bureaucracy to govern his vast kingdoms. Though Frederick's vicars exerted control over Siena in return for protection, such limited autonomy did not hinder Siena from prospering, nor from exerting increasing control over its immediate territory.

In fact, Siena's imperial sympathies allowed the city to avoid the ferocious battles between the nobility and the *popolo*, or popular class, that plagued other communes of the age. In cities across Italy, including in Siena, the *popolo* came to denote a particular part of the population. Specifically, the *popolo* comprised the thriving middle class of artisans, shopkeepers, dependents, and other non-nobles who had played a role in the economic rise and growth of urban Italy but who had not had any say in its governance. At the neighborhood level, this middle class had already by the twelfth century coalesced around occupation through the creation of guilds, which emphasized collective action and common defense, providing the masses with a means to combat the city's powerful elite families. At the city level, however, this class only obtained political organization in the thirteenth century, when, in Siena and across northern Italy, citizens demanded a greater say in matters of governance, and the Italian city-states entered an age of bold experimentation in representative governance.

In their attempt to create governments that had the support of the people and that were viewed as impartial arbiters of justice, Siena and its peers created the office of the *podestà*, the chief magistrate within each city. Out of a desire to move beyond the factionalism and class warfare that was endemic everywhere, cities appointed respected foreigners to serve as their *podestà*. In Siena, this meant that a knight or jurist from a city with which the Sienese were allied was brought in to manage the city's affairs in an impartial way, *super partes*. *Podestà* were brought in via the same contract that was drawn up for medics, professors, and mercenaries: contracts were made for a limited period of time, from six months to a year, and the official would come to Siena along with his *família*, which included judges and trusted guards.

Upon their installation to the office, the new *podestà* would receive the keys to the city, a formal ceremony through which he would become its temporary leader. The *podestà* headed the army and presided over the communal council, taking on this responsibility through a solemn oath found in a statute (*costituto*) that was periodically updated. No early thirteenth-century exemplar outlining precisely how the office functioned in Siena has survived, though some fragments from such a source have recently been identified. We do, however, have the city's complete constitution from 1262, which offers us our earliest portrait of the communal structure as well as the complexity of the functions that the commune had to undertake.

Yet the people of Siena were not satisfied with having an impartial *podestà*: they themselves wanted a greater say in political affairs. As a result, the *popolo* created a sort of political party, replete with statutes and councils, which gave the *popolo* the power to force the commune to recognize it as a public institution with certain collective rights. Further evidence of the growing power of the *popolo* can be found in the fact that the Captain of the Popolo acquired the rank of judge of appeals, who had the power to overturn certain sentences passed by the *podestà* or other chief judge in those cases which involved the *popolo*. In fact, by the middle of the thirteenth century, city statutes required that half of Siena's chief governing council of 24 citizens had to come from the *populares*: non-elites who represented artisan and working classes. The other half of the council continued to be selected from the city's leading families, who fought to maintain their power and influence in the brave new world of growing civic consciousness and an ever more powerful middle class.

Further complicating the political landscape in Siena was the fact that the Ghibelline cause also had a separate political organization in Siena, which had to balance its loyalty to the city with the needs of the imperial cause in its fight against the papacy and its Guelf allies. In such an environment, it must be said, the nobility remained essential, since they were experts in the use of arms and in diplomatic relations.

While merchants would come to dominate Siennese politics by the end of the thirteenth century, it is misleading to speak of a "merchant class" in Siena. After all, Siena's merchants were heterogeneous in their composition and were generally considered nobles in this period. The most successful businessmen among them were protagonists of the great international fairs, determining what goods or spices they could sell or what raw materials they could turn for a profit. Many Siennese merchants were bankers or even venture capitalists, deciding who or which businesses to fund and which goods would prove most profitable in the cities south of the Alps. Siena's leading wool merchants likewise spent much of their time outside of Siena while their businesses were run by master artisans who in turn took on apprentices and specialized workers known as *laboratores* who often operated from their homes. Though the sources do not give a sense of their number, women were also employed as hired workers in such enterprises. By the middle of the thirteenth century, Siennese were employed within the city as carpenters and bricklayers, blacksmiths and goldsmiths, leather artisans (who worked in the wholesale of leather goods), cobblers, and dozens of other types of artisans and craftsmen.

So what can we say about the size, layout, and composition of the city in the first half of the thirteenth century? Certainly, the gravitational pull of the city was no longer Castelvechio. Since the city's founding, Castelvechio had been the core of the city, but as the city expanded, its center relocated. By 1200, city officials were conducting business from rented buildings located near the church of San Pellegrino.⁷ Such a location placed the government in the heart of the developing city, near the Croce del Travaglio. This meeting point of Siena's three arteries became a natural site for conflicts between rival factions, which explains its name: *travaglio* meant challenge. As the Sienese government sought to control the center of the city and prevent such conflict in the heart of the city, they came up with a clever and effective solution: upon news of impending urban conflict, the government would put chains up in the area, effectively closing off the major artery of the city and preventing men on horseback from carrying out clan warfare or rebellion.

Merchant associations also set themselves up in the center of the city as well, choosing buildings located near San Pellegrino. Such a location placed them near the city's center of manufacturing and artisanal production around Fontebranda and Porta Salaria in an area close to Camporegio and the church of San Domenico. This location placed their shops and businesses directly in the path of travelers and pilgrims on their way to the cathedral and hospital of Santa Maria della Scala.

Of course, the headquarters for the governing officials and the merchants near San Pellegrino also put them only a short distance from the site upon which the Piazza del Campo would be built. At the time, this large area was called *Campus fori*, and it was a valley reached via a steep descending alleyway. Was the title of this place tied to its history of having been a site of a Roman forum? Dubious, given that no archeological evidence has ever been found to support such a claim. More likely, the name *Campus fori* took its name from a (purposeful?) misunderstanding. It is entirely possible that *fori* did not mean "forum" but that instead, it was a thirteenth-century spelling of the Italian word *fuori*, or "outside." After all, this *Campus fori* was, up until this time, a literal *campo fuori*, a "field outside" the walls.

As the city grew, this open field located between the urban development to the north and south became the obvious site upon which to build a communal palace, which was constructed in Siena far later than in neighboring cities. By the end of the twelfth century, the commune had begun acquiring private property and, according to surviving documents, they first erected the Bolgano palace, destined to be the mint and the home of the import tax collection offices. It was located on the far side of the valley, away from the city center, a location likely chosen in order to consolidate its public use and ensure that the valley would not be washed out. At some point in the thirteenth century, the Sienese knocked down the church of San Luca in order to make way for the construction of the town hall, though work on Siena's famed Palazzo dei Signori (now called the Palazzo Pubblico) would not begin until the end of the century.

As its population swelled, thirteenth-century Siena reached the natural end of its growth along the three ridges forming a Y-shape upon which the Sienese had built

their city. To be sure, the city's development was far from complete. The Piazza del Campo was already a public meeting space and marketplace, but not until after the battle of Montaperti in 1260 would it become the heart and civic center of Siena. At this time, it remained unpaved, lacked a civic tower or public hall, and did not yet have a public fountain. The monumental undertaking of expanding the city walls to incorporate the popular mendicant churches and the neighborhoods that had sprung up around them had not yet been completed. And though Santa Maria della Scala and the cathedral were both already central institutions and impressive monuments, they were both in the midst of expansion and decoration projects that were far from complete. The Sienese invested heavily in their university. They recognized the economic, social, and cultural benefits of having a leading university in the city, and they allocated resources to attract talented teachers from across Europe. In fact, decades before he would become Pope Giovanni XXI (1276–77), the Portuguese doctor Pietro Juliani taught medicine in Siena from 1245 to 1250.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Siena had assumed its shape and character. This city on a hill, once an Etruscan garrison, a Roman colony, and an unmemorable medieval village, had become a major player in Europe. It was as if the medieval city of the first millennium, consisting of Castelveccchio and the site of the cathedral, had sprouted two branches: the *terzo* of Camollia, beginning with the Banchi di sopra and heading north past the Tolomei and Salimbeni *palazzi*, as well as the Malavolti and Montanini family enclaves and the numerous taverns and hotels, and to the Porta Camolia; and San Martino, the lowest geographically of the three *terzi*, sloping ever downward to the southern gate leading to Rome, the Porta Romana.

For those who remained in the countryside, they too felt the impact of expanding urban power. Rural communities were able to exploit the city's expansion by siding with the city against their own traditional lords. Whether out of gratitude or simply out of fear of rebellion or abandonment of the rural communities, Siena felt obliged to privilege their condition through pacts favorable to the rural inhabitants. In return for their support and to ensure that the rural population remained sufficient for cultivating the necessary foodstuffs for the city, the Sienese granted rural communities the right to self-governance, though rural communities were still required to pay the *contado* tax, which varied between communities based on the economic and demographic realities within each community. The parchments of the grand thirteenth-century register of the Caleffo Vecchio detail the terms of submission for rural communities. On the whole, these documents illustrate the hegemony of the city, as well as its efforts to placate *contado* residents through fair terms.

In some instances, like with Grosseto, the Sienese met significant resistance. Owing to its proximity to Florence, Grosseto had remained an important target for Siena. The Sienese hoped that by subjecting Grosseto to their power, the Florentines would not be able to occupy the populous and rich Val d'Elsa, Poggibonsi, San Gimignano, Colle, or the entirety of the Chianti region. Florence already controlled the Ricasoli of Brolio, a castle in Chianti, as well as the Castellina, both of which it used to limit Siena's influence in the region. Unlike Siena, Arezzo, and

Florence, Grosseto had become a city of any import only in the first half of the 1100s when the papacy transferred Roselle's episcopal seat to Grosseto. Around 1200, with Siena in the midst of its great territorial expansion, Grosseto first entered into Siena's sphere of influence. However, the people of Grosseto, perhaps riled up by the Aldobrandeschi family who were the great lords of the territory, rebelled with other communities against the yoke of Siena in 1233. In a document of that year detailing their offenses entitled the *Memoriale delle Offese*, the Siennese blamed Grosseto specifically for the rebellion and demanded that its citizens pay dearly for this transgression. The same document praises Siena as a just and fair ruler whose authority and power should not be questioned or challenged. Taken as a whole, it is clear that the Siennese preferred to expand its power through mutually beneficial agreements with the populace, though the incident with Grosseto also illustrates that the Siennese resorted to force whenever necessary.

Siena's efforts to demonstrate the legitimacy of their authority extended well beyond conquering nearby territories, controlling garrisons, and subduing rebellions. Around this time, the Siennese first started to utilize the she-wolf as the communal symbol, alongside the white and black coat of arms. Of course, the she-wolf linked Siena to the iconography of Rome and was used by the Siennese to justify their expansion efforts by claiming a shared heritage with Rome's ancient past. Beyond the she-wolf, the Siennese of the time also began hiring local artists to paint frescoes on the commune's rented office walls. The great age of Siennese painting was just about to begin.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Siena had managed to subdue southern Tuscany, build a formidable and well-defended city, create a stable and representative government, and provide sufficient economic opportunity for the many hundreds of individuals pouring into the city each year. The only real threat to its ambitions in Tuscany was Florence. Certainly, Florence always had certain advantages in size, power, and wealth that made direct confrontation with the Florentines fraught with peril. But Siena's success depended primarily on its economic clout, and Florence's supremacy threatened to steal away business, travelers, and profits, particularly after it started minting the golden florin, which would quickly become the most prized currency of the Middle Ages for its purity, diffusion, and reliability.

Beyond the economic challenges an ascendant Florence posed, Siena was also impacted politically, owing to Florence's alliance with the Gueft cause. In fact, the Florentines did everything they could to stir up anti-Siennese sentiment, appealing to Gueft loyalists in Siena and in other places of strategic importance, including Montalcino and the large castle of Montepulciano in the Chiana valley. Siena and Florence made numerous attempts to avoid all-out warfare, and they occasionally came to agreements on matters, such as setting conditions for accepting exiles from the rival city.

Within this context of concurrent ambition, wealth, and overlapping economic interests, it was only a matter of time before the two found themselves in direct confrontation. After the death of Frederick II, Frederick's natural-born son Manfred had himself crowned king of Sicily in Palermo. When the papacy excommunicated Manfred on the grounds that the pope was the feudal lord of the kingdom, the dispute quickly dragged Gueft and Ghibelline allies into conflict. For

the Sienese, the conflict was full of risk. While the Sienese were under the protection of Manfred and had sworn allegiance to the Ghibelline cause, as we have seen, Sienese bankers were major players in Rome and had grown rich serving as creditors for the Roman Curia. The papacy depended on Florence as its most important ally, and together they came to recognize the strategic benefit that would come from attacking Siena directly: defeat Manfred's wealthiest and most powerful ally and watch the Ghibelline alliance fall apart. Of course, Manfred too recognized the importance of Siena remaining a Ghibelline stronghold. In short order, both parties rallied their allies to their cause and began to prepare for battle. That battle, at Montaperti on September 4, 1260, would be one of the largest in the history of medieval Europe. Capping a seemingly miraculous century of growth, their victory at Montaperti would leave the Sienese as the victors of Tuscany, ushering in a golden age in Sienese society and culture. Let us now turn to that history.

Notes

- 1 A document from 1181 contains the earliest known reference to Sienese currency. A Sienese coin dating from that decade remains on display at the Monte dei Paschi.
- 2 With the exception of Florence, Siena is the most cited city in the text.
- 3 The Malavolti complex has been altered on numerous occasions: first around 1400 as a result of accusations of treason against the family; then in the early twentieth century with the restructuring of the piazza della Posta; and finally after World War II, when it was converted into the ugly building one sees today. It is the site of the Chamber for Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture. While many different projects have been proposed to improve the structure over the last 30 years, nothing has come of it.
- 4 While the facade today is largely the result of modern alterations, the insignia of the Balzana (the black and white banner of the commune of Siena) to the right of the main entrance dates to Siena's confiscation of the palace in 1423.
- 5 The area is delineated by Porta Giustizia (from the inside, at the foot of the Market square); Porta Peruzzini, near the castle of Montone, the gate along the Via Francigena that would have lead to the Porta Romana and encircled the castle of Montone; Porta San Vienne, today called Porta Pispini; the Porta Salvani gate; the Porta San Francesco, which leads to the convent constructed outside of the thirteenth-century city walls; and finally to Porta Ovale.
- 6 So imposing and foreboding was this Sienese fortress in its day that when Dante encounters giants near the end of his journey through hell in *Inferno*, he compares them with the fortified towers of Monteriggioni.
- 7 The church of San Pellegrino was demolished in the nineteenth century when the Sienese constructed Piazza Indipendenza to celebrate the unification of Italy.

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3

SIENA'S GOLDEN AGE

Montaperti and Good Government (1260–1355)

Montaperti and its aftermath

Students of Florence, Siena, and Tuscany all know something about Montaperti. Memorialized by Dante as the massacre that colored the Arbia River red (in *Inferno*, X, 85), Siena's victory on September 4, 1260, marked its greatest moment of triumph, while for Florence, the loss was catastrophic and nearly led to the destruction of the city.¹ For the Florentines, owing to Dante's work and Giovanni Villani's history, Montaperti came to serve as a cautionary tale of Florentine hubris, ambition, and divisiveness. But in fact, Montaperti was even more important for the Siennese, as the memory of the battle and the legendary stories of Siena's victory that developed in the centuries following the battle have shaped Siennese identity, discourse, and history up to the present day.

As the previous chapter illustrated, over the first half of the thirteenth century, the growth of Siena and Florence put the two great Tuscan cities on a collision course, while Manfred claiming the imperial throne was the event that made confrontation inevitable. To be clear, far more was at stake in any impending battle between Florence and Siena than the supremacy of Tuscany, as important as that was. With both the king of Sicily and the pope involved in the conflict and Guef and Ghibelline allies flocking to their respective parties, the battle that would take place at Montaperti would have enormous political and economic implications that had the potential to reshape Europe.

Siena had become such an important and wealthy city because of its proximity to Rome and Florence, and because it was situated along the major thoroughfare of the age, the Via Francigena. Because of its location between Guef Florence and the center of Guelfism in Rome, Ghibelline leaders from Frederick II to Manfred came to view a powerful Ghibelline Siena as central to their ambitions of restoring the rights of the Holy Roman Empire in Italy. On the other side,

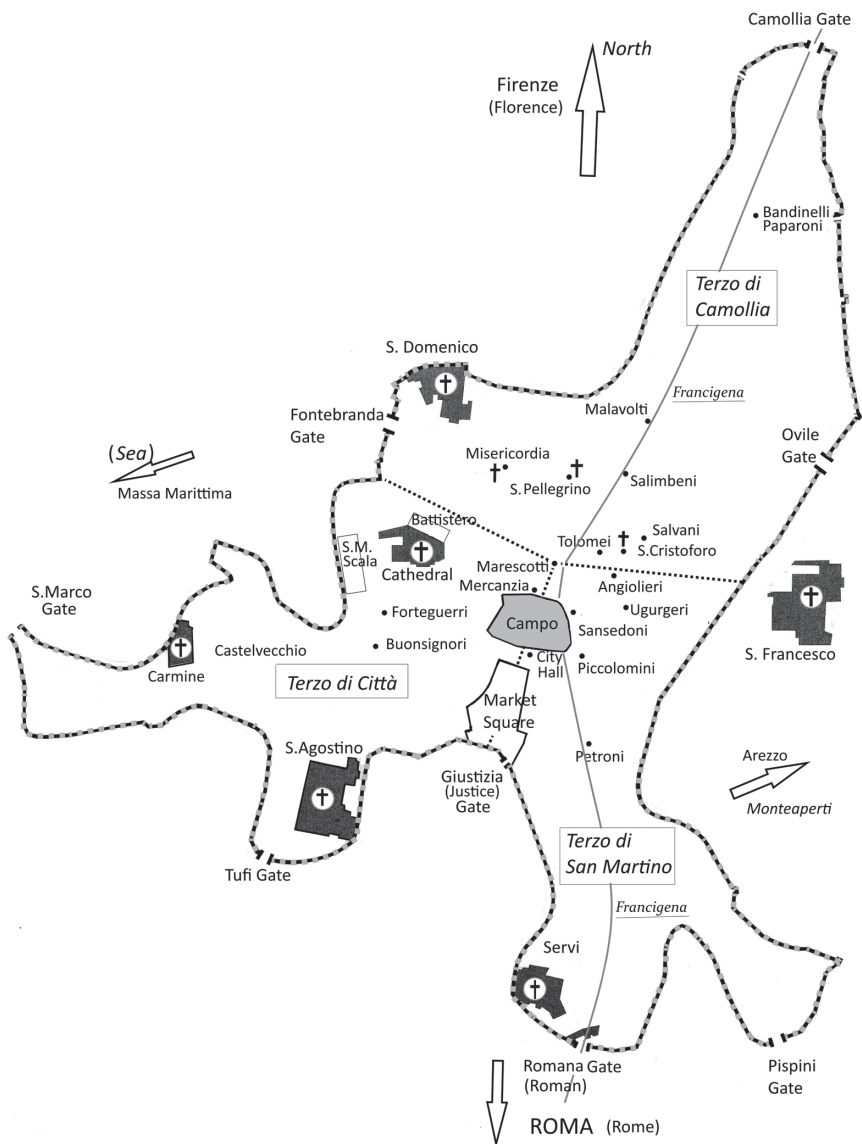


FIGURE 3.1 Map of Siena at the end of the thirteenth century. This map shows Siena's main institutions, churches, and urban fortresses belonging to noble families during the early years of the Nine's rule

Florence and Rome recognized the strategic significance of Siena to the Ghibelline cause, and for this reason, they viewed war against Siena as the most effective way of fatally weakening their enemies. Beyond the political importance of the battle, a letter from some Siennese merchants to their business partners in Paris dating to three months before the battle lays out the financial consequences of the battle,

depending on its outcome. The letter serves as a good reminder that behind the rhetoric of piety found in the majority of medieval documents, there were plenty of individuals whose primary concern was profit: in the letter, the slaughtering of fellow Christians is taken for granted, and the merchants focus only on the financial opportunities and risks that such warfare presented.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1260, both sides raised funds, rallied allies, and prepared for war. The Ghibellines managed to put together an army of between 15,000 and 20,000 soldiers, comprising men from all Ghibelline cities in Italy, including Cortona and Pisa, as well as Siena, and at least 400 German knights sent by Manfred.² The Guelfs gathered an enormous army estimated at double the size of the Ghibelline contingent. After months of negotiations between the two sides, used by both parties to delay the conflict in order to provide them with more time to prepare, the large Guelf formation departed from Florence in August 1260, first heading to Montalcino with the goal of liberating the small garrisoned city, which the Sieneese were busy besieging. With such an enormous army, it quickly became clear that this large Guelf contingent had no plans to stop at Montalcino. Instead, in a show of force, the army marched to the outskirts of Siena. Florentine ambassadors then demanded Siena's capitulation and threatened the destruction of the city's walls and the loss of its sovereignty.

In response, the Sieneese made their final preparations for war, securing payment for additional German mercenaries from the Salimbeni banking family, weapons from the city's craftsmen, and prayers and processions from the city's religious leaders. In the lead-up to battle, the Sieneese even accepted the services of Guido Bonatti, a famous astrologer of the time. Given the numerical superiority of the Guelf army, many Sieneese families said what they imagined might be their final goodbyes to sons, husbands, and fathers as they headed off to battle.

While all indications pointed to a massive Florentine victory, when the two sides finally did battle on September 4, 1260, the Ghibellines won handily. There are many theories that attempt to explain the reason the smaller army won. Most likely, the victory was primarily the result of two major factors: superior planning by the Ghibelline side and treachery on the part of Ghibelline Florentines. The German knights, mounted, well armed, and well protected, ambushed the Florentines. Dante places the Florentine man that he claims was responsible for the Guelf party's defeat, Bocca degli Abbati, in the deepest circle of hell for his treachery. Supposedly, Bocca treasonously chopped off the hand of the Florentine standard-bearer during the battle, which sent the Guelf army into chaos and led to their annihilation.

What is certain is that the battle was a bloodbath, deserving of a painful memory during the years that followed. Thousands of prisoners – estimates range from 5,000 to 15,000 – were transferred to Siena and held until certain ransoms were satisfied. One of the only precisely known facts regarding Florentine hostages is that the number was so great that the city had to pay for 472 guards and rent buildings around the city to house them. Among the prisoners was a Florentine artist of note, Coppo di Marcovaldo, who chose to paint while a prisoner in

Siena. In fact, the beautiful *Madonna with Child* that he painted while in Siena remains on display to this day in Santa Maria dei Servi.³

The consequences of the Ghibelline victory were dramatic for all parties involved. For the Florentines, their defeat led not only to the death of thousands of their men and the imprisonment of thousands more, but it nearly resulted in the city's destruction. In fact, the city was only saved when the famous Florentine Ghibelline Farinata degli Uberti convinced his party not to destroy it. For those communities who had resisted Siennese power, such as Montalcino, Florence's defeat was also devastating. After having buried their dead, the inhabitants of Montalcino were forced to perform a public act of dedication in the center of Siena's public square as a punishment for having fought back for so many years against Siennese expansion. Everywhere, those powerful families and rural communities who had previously rebelled against Siena reentered the orbit of the city, while some rebels fled to Radicofani, near the border of the papal state to avoid capitulating to the Siennese.

While the Ghibelline victory sent Siena's enemies scrambling, the papacy used the tools at its disposal to try to weaken the Ghibelline alliance. Most notably, the pope retaliated by ordering Siena to sever its privileged ties with Manfred. When the city refused, the pope smacked them with a sentence of excommunication. Such papal action had grave economic consequences for Siena's merchants: their debtors were exonerated from having to pay anything back for as long as the Siennese remained excommunicated. The papacy also sought to divide Siena by exonerating certain Siennese families, namely those who had distanced themselves from the Ghibelline faction and had remained neutral or loyal to Rome during the conflict.

The victorious Ghibellines knew that the Church would use such actions to obtain its political goals but also recognized that if they could sufficiently strengthen their own position, they could force the papacy to reconcile. In fact, several times earlier in the thirteenth century during the reign of Emperor Frederick II, the papacy had proven itself willing to reverse course and lift the excommunication when the imperial cause proved too strong to defeat. Thus, in the aftermath of Montaperti, the Ghibellines worked to solidify their gains, with the Siennese hoping that their wealth and growing power would force some sort of reconciliation amenable to their interests. It should be noted that this excommunication and the city's other occasional run-ins with Rome seems to have no impact on Siennese civic religion: work on the cathedral continued unabated, new artistic works continued to be commissioned, and the city made use of religious processions and feast days in order to legitimize governmental authority. A quick perusal of the city's 1262 constitution confirms this fact: the text opens by emphasizing Siena's orthodoxy and the city's obligation to financially support and protect the cathedral, the city's churches, and convents.

But what the papacy wanted from Siena was more than just constitutional statements of orthodoxy and the exercise of civic religion; it wanted Siena to join the Guelph party and abandon the Ghibellines. Siena's merchants recognized the economic risks that prolonged excommunication posed for their financial success, and they pushed the city to reconcile with the papacy. As a result, the Siennese aligned themselves formally with Florence and the Guelph party, even if it would not hesitate

subsequently, when the occasion arose, to declare itself favorable to the empire, in order to maintain its independence and avoid being sucked into the papal state.

Such a reversal did in fact arise before the end of the 1260s, when the Ghibellines and Guelfs battled once again in Tuscany, and Siena decided to rejoin the Ghibelline cause. But this time, at Colle Val d'Elsa in 1269, Florence's Guelf alliance, aided by foreign mercenaries, including fierce Angevine cavalry, handed a humiliating defeat to Siena and the Ghibellines. In one of the more ignoble events in Siena's history, the Siennese commander and proud Ghibelline ally Provenzano Salvani was decapitated, and the Guelf army put his head on a stake and passed it around among the soldiers. As a consequence of the Guelf victory, the Ghibellines were forced out of power in Siena and the Salvani family palace was destroyed. Over the next few years, the Guelfs consolidated their gains, and in 1274, the papacy helped bring a staunch papal ally to the imperial throne, with the ascension of the Habsburg family. From that point on, both popes and emperors sought to end the factional parties in the cities of northern Italy, recognizing that factionalism was devastating to the cities and their people.

Given that the victory at Montaperti was overturned less than a decade later, what then is its legacy? Why is Montaperti remembered as the most important event in the city's history? In fact, it was only in the fifteenth century, as Siena sought to recover from a series of crises and its diminished role in Italian politics, that Montaperti took on an outsized role in the collective imagination of the Siennese. The city's fifteenth-century chroniclers weaved together fact and myth to create foundation legends based upon the events that preceded the battle of Montaperti. They describe how the Siennese, in an act of desperation and faith, formally submitted their city to the Virgin Mary in an act of feudal subjugation, with the bishop and the leading civic authority, Buonaguida Lucari, walking hand in hand up to the high altar of the cathedral. Kneeling before an image of the Virgin Mary, Buonaguida prayed, "Gracious Virgin, Queen of the sky, mother of sinners, myself included, I give this city over to you, as I do the entire *contado* which surrounds it, and as a sign of this, I give you the keys of the gate of this city." After placing the keys on the altar in this formal gesture of submission to the Virgin, Buonaguida continued: "I also pray and beg that you will guard it, liberate it, and defend it against our enemies, the Florentines, and against whosoever may seek to oppress it, subordinate it or put it to ruin." Some of the surviving accounts describe how a notary formally recorded the city's submission to the Virgin. One chronicler even claims that the cloak of the Virgin could be seen above the Siennese during the battle, protecting them and ensuring their victory. The chronicles collectively assert that it was as a result of this key offering, supplication, and dedication, that Siena, aided by the Virgin Mary, defeated Florence at Montaperti and became the City of the Virgin.

Though not based in any verifiable thirteenth-century record, these fifteenth-century legendary accounts shaped the historical memory of the event, transforming it from one important battle in a much longer history of conflict with Florence into a watershed moment in Siena's history. Far from being just a military victory, in the chroniclers' retelling, Montaperti provided proof of Siennese

exceptionalism: despite being vastly outnumbered by the Florentines, the piety, patriotism, and concern for the common good among the Sienese was so great that it led St. Mary to intervene and grant victory to the Sienese. The accounts of Montaperti became the crowning Sienese myth of origins, explaining the origins of Siena's special relationship with its patron saint by harkening back to the age Montaperti, an idealized age of cooperation among the citizenry, and one that later generations hoped could provide a model of behavior for citizens regardless of their vocation, age, or gender.

Yes, Siena's influence, prosperity, and stability would in fact decline in later centuries. But the eight decades that directly followed Montaperti were arguably the most impressive in Sienese history, witnessing awe-inspiring urban development and monumental building, unparalleled artistic achievement, and an era of political stability that was the envy of rulers everywhere. During these decades, the Sienese created the vast majority of the city's landmarks, monuments, and artistic masterpieces. It is no exaggeration to say that the "medieval" Siena that one encounters visiting the city today first took shape in the century after Montaperti. For the period before Montaperti, the only evidence that we have for the city's architectural styles comes from the city's gates and fountains. While some artworks from this time survive as well and can be seen in the Pinacoteca and on the tablets of the Biccherna in the state archives, there is not yet a specifically Sienese artistic style. Of course, the same could be said for Florence and the other Italian city-states, most of which developed their own architectural styles and began to invest heavily in artistic patronage only in the second half of the thirteenth century. But Siena still proves an extraordinary case, as the city's great wealth, its dependence on pilgrims and travelers, and its competition with Florence pushed the city to incredible heights, leading to the creation of some of the most impressive architectural and artistic achievements of the age. In particular, during the seven-decade reign of the government of the Nine, the Sienese constructed the Palazzo dei Signori and the Torre del Mangia; expanded and decorated the cathedral; worked on numerous urban improvement programs, including the paving and reorganization of city streets; published the first Italian communal constitution written in the vulgate; expanded the city walls and erected numerous beautiful new city gates; constructed new aqueducts that brought water to the Piazza del Campo; and commissioned Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes of *Good and Bad Government*, as well as those great Marian masterpieces by Duccio and Simone Martini.

Santa Maria della Scala and Siena's principal institutions

The most important charitable organization in Siena during this age was the great hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, which served a fundamental role in the Sienese state's stability and economic well-being. Owing in large part to the enormous patrimony the hospital had acquired since its founding in the late ninth century, the Spedale had become an essential resource that the ruling regime could lean on in times of famine and crisis. By the fourteenth century, thanks to the aid of additional

bequests and donations, the Spedale became the biggest landowner of the state. Their reserves allowed for the disbursement of daily alms to the needy and were a major reason that despite a frightening number of famines during the age of the Nine, none imperiled the regime.

Like any serious hospitals of the time, Santa Maria adopted and raised the many abandoned newborns that were often left on the wheel that was placed for mothers who had to make that most terrible of decisions. Known as *gettarelli*, or “tossed ones,” orphaned men found work through the institution in or around Siena, while orphaned women received a small dowry from the Spedale to assist them in finding a suitor. If they did not get married, then the women were expected to remain at the hospital and work for its benefit. Santa Maria della Scala also functioned as an entity of social security and elderly care, particularly because of the Spedale’s policy of accepting donations of private individuals’ homes in return for providing the donor care for the rest of their life, during which time they were allowed to continue living in their abode. When donors could no longer live alone, the Spedale would take them in, allowing them to live in the Spedale. In return, the Spedale was free to do whatever it wished with the homes it acquired, giving the institution significant control over the development of the city fabric and surrounding territory.

Beyond its important role in providing for the welfare of the Sienese, Santa Maria della Scala was also a major economic center and became a kind of bank. With such vast funds, the hospital was able to obtain important relics from Byzantium at Venetian markets. In fact, in the 1330s, the hospital acquired unusual relics of doubtful authenticity, including the girdle of the Virgin Mary and a vial of her breast milk. Though outlandish, these relics helped attract pilgrims to the city, at precisely the time when pilgrims were increasingly bypassing Siena by stopping in Florence instead on their travels through the peninsula. In short, the hospital sought to draw pilgrims and tourists to the city by providing a unique experience that would satisfy their curiosity and deepen their religiosity.

The Spedale had as its head a rector who was required to hand over all his assets to the Spedale. Though the canons of the Duomo had long held the right to nominate the hospital’s rector, the process ended up under the jurisdiction of the commune, following their requisition of the Spedale in the early fourteenth century. The elected rector, however, had a great advantage over those who nominated him: it was a lifelong position, giving those who held the office a certain amount of freedom and autonomy that was quite rare. As a result, the rector was able to devote his life to understanding and addressing the needs of the institutions without worrying about political considerations.

Besides Santa Maria della Scala, Siena always had a number of other smaller hospitals in the city and its territory along the Via Francigena. At times they were hospices as well as hotels, though they still maintained a religious community there within. Among the many Sienese institutions founded by pious and industrious private citizens, the Spedale of Monna Agnese deserves special



FIGURE 3.2 Piazza del Campo with view of the Duomo. Siena's chief civic monuments were well underway by the fourteenth century: on the left, the Palazzo Pubblico and Torre del Mangia; on the right, the Mercanzia palace, which was restored in the eighteenth century. In the center is the cathedral

mention, as from the thirteenth century onward, it was under the control of a female rector. This institution was run by and for women, and it remained autonomous from any secular or religious institutions into the eighteenth century. Another entity that deserves mention here is the Brothers of Mercy (*Fratti della Misericordia*), a confraternity founded by the beatified Andrea Gallerani (d. 1251) that provided social assistance to Siena's neediest. The thirteenth century also witnessed the Cistercians' arrival in Sienese territory, when the papacy entrusted to them the Abbey of Monte Amiata. In the 1220s, the Cistercians constructed the Abbey of San Galgano, which remains one of the most iconic structures in Sienese territory. Situated between Monticiano and Chiusdino, and now roofless, San Galgano stands as a highly esteemed model of French Gothic architecture. During the age of the Nine, the monks of San Galgano held control over the office of Treasurer for the Sienese commune's financial administration (Camerlengo della Biccherna), trusted for their competence and impartiality. Another religious order, the Humiliati, established themselves in the area of Camollia and were active in the wool industry. In time, they came to be trusted by civic officials who asked them to serve, as the monks of Galgano had done, as financial administrators for the city's office of the Biccherna. They also helped the lay confraternity of Benevolence form an aid and public assistance company that was so well received that they were afforded a handsome donation near Camporegio from the Malavolti, the powerful magnate family that produced four of Siena's bishops between 1282 and 1371.

The government of the Nine (1287–1355)

The Sienese government that oversaw this age of building, art, innovation, and good governance was referred to as the *Nove*, or the government of the Nine, the number of participants comprising its chief governing body. No other period of Siena has been so richly studied as the age of the Nine, owing to the fascinating body of evidence that survives and the great achievements of the age, and as a result, we are able to understand in some detail how Siena's government worked under the Nine.

The first thing that must be said about the Nine is that it is nearly impossible to point to specific individual members of this body who were particularly influential in shaping the city and its governance. This is because the city adopted a series of strict rules that kept any individual, family, or corporation from wielding too much power or influence. While the Nine were a representative body, selected from the merchant and working class, they were not elected by the citizenry. Instead, every two months, a new Nine were selected by a small commission of men, all of whom held some sort of privileged position in the city, either due to their economic clout or their political experience. Specifically, several leaders of the city's Council of Mercanzia, as well as the members of the Nine finishing their term of office, took the lead in putting together the next group of the Nine. Thus, the successors to the Nine were selected not by the people but by its elite. This helps explain the regime's remarkable stability: not beholden to the whims of the masses, the ruling class pursued an effective, rational, and consistent course of action in their handling of civic affairs, while pursuing their collective interests in a way that benefited the common good. One way in which the system kept any family from obtaining too much influence was through the adoption of strict rules that heavily restricted the ability of families to dominate the Nine. For instance, there were rules prohibiting anyone with a relative who had already served from holding office for a set term. To ensure the integrity of the process and that no single family could monopolize political power, the laws required that the *podestà* and Captain of the People be foreign born and thus, not attached to a local family or party. These officials were tasked with overseeing the selection process for each new group of Nine governors.

The two-month term of service for the office of the Nine means that a total of 98 men served on the Nine each year! For such a system to work, where each person holds office for only 60 days, it was essential for the ruling class to develop a culture of collegiality, where hundreds of men representing their respective families could work together to advance their shared interests. The General Council, comprising 300 men from the city's families, met in the Palazzo Pubblico to debate domestic politics or foreign affairs, and they advised the Nine on pressing issues of the day. The *podestà* oversaw council meetings, though it was up to the Nine to set the agenda. Other officials, including the Captain of the People, as well as numerous notaries and judges, all played a role in the continuity of civic governance under the Nine. So too did the government departments of the Biccherna and the Gabella. Even though the Nine lived in the communal palace during their term of

service, they were not secluded. In fact, members of the Nine regularly met with Sienese elites to discuss public matters, even if this was often done in an informal manner. After all, each year another 98 men learned the office of the Nine by serving within it, meaning that there were literally thousands of men in Siena who had served at the highest level of Siena's government, and many of these men were often summoned to the Palazzo to provide counsel and help provide continuity to governmental policy.

Siena's defeat at Colle val d'Elsa and the city's subsequent alliance with the Guelph cause meant that members of the Nine were required to become Guelph. Beyond the Nine, merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, and craftsmen also were required to support the Guelph cause. Such requirements aimed to curb factionalism in the city and to prevent uprisings among those disloyal to Siena's political establishment. What is more surprising is that the Nine actually succeeded in creating a government that was not beholden to the richest members of Sienese society. To accomplish this goal of creating a truly popular (that is, a government of the *popolo*) and stable government, Siena's leadership managed to systematically exclude dozens of Siena's grand families, including the Tolomei, Piccolomini, Salimbeni, and Malavolti, from holding high government office in the city. Siena's governors made a list of noble families, often caustically referred to as *magnati* or *casati*, whom the political elite feared were capable of subordinating the public good to their own familial and partisan interests. Other powerful figures, including doctors of law and medicine, as well as all notaries, regardless of their class, were also prohibited from holding government office in the city. First made in 1277 and updated periodically thereafter, this list of prohibited families is revealing about power dynamics in Siena. Siena's political elite, comprised largely of middle-class merchant families, was able to control the city's most powerful and violent members through the creation of this juridically defined social category for noble families. It suggests that the city's merchants (even those who were listed among the list of magnates), shopkeepers, and the middle-class artisans and craftsmen were united and powerful enough not only to pass such a policy but also to prevent the magnates from overturning it. The Nine were also effective in arguing that public policy should support the *ben comune*, or the common good, as the age's preachers routinely emphasized in their sermons. It is also clear from the exclusion of Siena's nobility from the highest official level of government (called the Concistoro) that Siena's most powerful families were themselves disunited and often violently antagonistic toward other noble families. In fact, perhaps the best explanation as to why Siena didn't fall under the rule of a prince or lord throughout its medieval and Renaissance history is that the number of wealthy families with competing interests prevented any single family from ever overthrowing the government and establishing its own despotic regime. In fact, as we will see, the only family who came close to controlling Siena was the Salimbeni, after the collapse of the Nine.

Given that thousands of men held the highest office of Siena's government of the Nine over the regime's seven decades of rule, opportunities to serve on the Nine were available to those of means or talent. Individuals chosen for office had to

earn the respect of their fellow professionals and neighbors and demonstrate their loyalty to the city. The Nine's closed election system was challenged in 1318 and then again in 1337 when the urban inhabitants rose up to protest their lack of say in government policy. In response, the Siennese adopted a political reform in 1337 that had worked in Pisa and Florence: every few years, the 300 members of the General Council of the commune would vote the list of *populares* to serve on the Nine. The names were written on pieces of parchment that were closed with wax and put in a box solemnly deposit and preserved in the Church of San Domenico. This box could only be opened with multiple, different keys, which had been entrusted to various persons so as to avoid any kind of tampering or fraud. Once the members of the General Council had made their selections, the next bimonthly Nine would be chosen by lot from the box. Such a system favored those who sought to make a name for themselves in civic life, either in their district companies, or in the city's General Council, Siena's most important deliberative body. Given the nature of the selection process, those who rose to the Nine were likely to be moderate, conciliatory, and civic minded, as they were selected by men who understood the challenges of the office and who were protective of the regime.

While the magnate class was forbidden from serving on the Nine, they had other ways of influencing Siena's political institutions. Nobles were allowed to serve on the General Council as long as they swore an oath of loyalty to the regime, to the Guelf cause, and to the city. They also were required to pledge to pursue policies on behalf of the population of their *terzi*, not their family. In addition, the nobility continued to handle the army and ambassadorships, as had been customary since the founding of the commune in the eleventh century. They were also permitted to serve in leadership roles within the Mercanzia, a powerful organization composed of many of the city's chief guilds that was autonomous of the commune. The Mercanzia's location in the Piazza del Campo, in front of the communal palace, makes clear its importance to the late medieval city. In fact, the General Council and the merchant's guild worked together, since both played key roles in economic decisions affecting the whole city, such as the financial impact of pursuing policies that might lead to retaliation from the papacy or other city-states, or in determining what roads, garrisons, or other properties required extra protection from bandits, rural lords, or mercenaries. In fact, the commune delegated a number of specific roles and powers to the Mercanzia, including the management of the city's official weights and measures and the power to determine appropriate reprisals against other cities. The city's constitution also granted the Mercanzia authority in judicial cases involving foreign merchants and their associates, as well as pilgrims and other travelers, through the establishment of their own special court. The establishment of city-run debtors' prisons makes clear that the city was business-friendly, and there's no doubt that Siena's economy depended on such measures: Siena was a trade hub that depended on merchants, corporations, and lenders viewing Siena, its government, and its laws as reliable and fair. Beyond this concern for the city's reputation, if foreigners were mistreated or their debts weren't paid back, Siena's merchants risked reprisals on their goods and economic retaliation from other

cities, as such policies were allowed by the international trade laws of the time (the so-called *lex mercatoria*). Overall, the Nine worked to ensure Siena's economic prosperity, and specifically, the prosperity of its large and small businesses, and more broadly, its merchant class.

One interesting byproduct of the economic and social revolution of the late Middle Ages was the rise of fashion and conspicuous consumption. Flying in the face of the friars' sermons on economic and social inequality and injustice, the rich separated themselves through ever more elegant, refined, or ostentatious dress, leading cities including Siena under the Nine to pass sumptuary legislation that forbade the rich from wearing expensive jewels or clothing that were considered too striking or lavish. The government of the Nine even created the Office of the Donnaio to enforce regulations specifically related to women's dress and conduct. Ostentatious displays of wealth, the Sienese argued, had the potential to rouse social envy and stoke discord within the city, and thus, they were to be avoided for the benefit of the common good. There were economic reasons for such regulations as well, as the city wanted to discourage the importation of stylish products from abroad in order to benefit local craftsmen, clothmakers, and artisans. Penitential preachers regularly harped on the vanity of fancy clothing, particularly of women, while encouraging their audiences to make better use of their wealth through giving alms. As surviving inventories of goods illustrate, such regulations did little to dissuade Sienese elites from chasing the latest fashion trends. The inventory of Donusdeo dei Malavolti, bishop of Siena from 1316 to 1350, is notable for the finery, embroidered fabrics, and highly coveted imported goods found therein. Even in the countryside, the inventory of one wealthy Sienese woman named Ciambragina di Serre di Rapolano from a town near Montaperti lists furs, clothing, and accessories produced in Spain and France. Still, the regulations make clear that the Nine, like its peers across Italy, sought to stigmatize public displays of extreme wealth: urbanization had made it possible to get goods from anywhere in the Mediterranean world, and even beyond, but clearly, decadence posed problems for creating a unified urban polity.

From Siena's 1310 city statutes, we get a picture of some of the strategies the Nine pursued to keep the peace. The three Gonfaliери, who were the civic leaders of each of the city's *terzi*, were charged with overseeing the organization of the *popolo* into dozens of district companies.⁴ Through the Gonfaliери, the ruling class was able to keep close watch over the *popolo* and limit their ability to organize and protest. Large gatherings and political meetings were also prohibited for reasons of public safety. The Nine knew only too well that large gatherings, whatever their intended purpose, were what made rebellion possible. The Nine also made efforts to limit the presence of weapons within the city. Beyond concern for bodily injury, the Nine restricted weapons in order to curb damage to property, though axes were preserved in storage rooms belonging to each district company. Despite the fear that such axes could be used in times of rebellion, they were deemed necessary, owing to the grave threat that fire posed to the many wooden buildings in the medieval city. Military expeditions

continued under the Nine, but with far lesser frequency than during the age of territorial expansion in the decades leading up to Montaperti. Instead of drafting soldiers from the district companies, as Siena had traditionally done, during the reign of the Nine, the city began hiring mercenary soldiers with increasing frequency. Mercenaries often lived in Siena during their term of service, and the Sienese made sure they were paid regularly, as were the special police forces that roamed the streets doing the government's bidding. Still, the fact that the Sienese were unable or unwilling to field their own army and that mercenaries' fidelity to the regime came from payment and not political allegiance were undoubtedly worrisome developments, ones that would prove devastating to the city later in the fourteenth century.

To prevent urban uprisings, the city restricted public events, including dances, parties, and festivals, as all public events required government sanction. The Nine's fears that public events could be used as opportunities to overthrow the government were not unwarranted, and, in fact, that's exactly what happened in 1325. In that year on the final Sunday before Carnival, hundreds of Sienese from the city's three districts gathered in the Piazza del Campo to take part in an organized traditional fistfight (known as a *gioco delle pugna*), with the men from the *terzi* of San Martino and Camollia squaring off against those from Città. Yet according to fourteenth-century Sienese chronicler Agnolo di Tura, things quickly escalated when conspirators used the occasion to attempt to topple the Nine:

And so it happened that the two sides began to brawl with their fists in such a way that two of the *terzi* chased those from Città out of the Campo. Then they began to throw rocks while yet others began to use clubs. The combatants then armed themselves with shields and protected their bodies with armor, and they wielded lances, swords and arrows; and there was such commotion and so many people fighting in the Campo that it seemed as if the entire world had been turned upside down. And all the soldiers of the Commune came armed to the Campo, as did the *podestà* of Siena with his staff; the Nine then commanded that the brawl come to an end. But it was so chaotic that the participants could not be separated. The captain of war with his men and the *podestà* of Siena attempted to separate the two sides, one from the other, but they could not. Some of the soldier's horses died and even several soldiers were killed. More individuals continued to flood into the Campo wielding crossbows, axes, and swords, thus adding to the enormity of the conflict. Neither the government of the Nine nor anyone else was able to save the city from such ruin.⁵

According to our chronicler, if not for the intervention of the city's bishop and clergy, the Nine would have been toppled. He writes that the city's religious processed together to the Campo and "began to pass into the middle of the fighting, so that the number of priests and friars with the cross continued to grow. The fighting started to lessen and the combatants began to separate, owing to the entreaties of

the bishop and all the priests and friars, and in this way, the fighters were separated and the conflict ended.”

While the bishop’s intervention in ending the uprising is unique, the rebellion itself was only one of several the Nine put down. For instance, in October 1311, Sienese officials quashed a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the Nine when it discovered that “some persons of the city of Siena, in a not moderate number, both nobles and magnates and *popolani* [had] made and composed a sect, sworn plot, and conspiracy.” Though the plot of 1311 was discovered before there was bloodshed, the ruling regime would not be so lucky seven years later when a loose alliance of the city’s leading guilds, and several magnate families, conspired to overthrow the Nine. According to our chronicler, Agnolo di Tura, on the appointed day, Thursday, 26 October 1318, the conspirators attacked the communal palace, screaming “death to the Nine and long live the *popolo*!” The Nine quickly summoned the city’s police forces, together with 350 mercenary infantry and cavalry, as well as more than twenty crossbowmen, who put down the anti-government rebellion in a bloody and deadly battle in the Campo. This rebellion was followed by similar attempts to overthrow the government in 1319 and 1320.

But the greatest threat to the Nine occurred when the German emperor, Henry II, invaded Italy following his decision of 1310, with the goal of restoring his imperial prerogatives in Italy. Playing on the factional strife occurring between and within cities, he presented himself as a restorer of peace. Across the peninsula, Henry received assistance from the many political exiles who desired to return to their native cities and reclaim assets that had been confiscated by the opposing faction. They also hoped for regime change so that they and their families could again hold public offices and regain control of the city. Henry’s violent and imprudent actions disquieted his Guelph enemies, and in response to his venture, Florence and the papacy headed a league that boldly opposed him. Under considerable economic strain, Siena fought with its Guelph allies in the military campaigns against him, in Rome and beyond. Fortunately for the Nine, before the fight could come to Siena proper, the emperor suddenly died, near Siena along the Via Francigena at Buonconvento.

Beyond the attempted coups and rebellions the Nine faced within the city, they also had to contend with rebellions from recently acquired rural communities. When Grosseto and Massa Marittima rebelled in the early fourteenth century, Siena responded forcefully, making sure that neither would be able to rebel again. With Siena’s age of expansion well over, Siena could not afford to lose control over its territory, especially considering that it had made considerable investments in the fortifications at Paganico in the late thirteenth century, and at the fortress and port of Talamone in the early fourteenth. There was another reason for Siena’s intervention and suppression of its territories: Sienese bank failures at the turn of the century had forced the city and its elites to look for surer investments in the form of fertile land in the countryside. Not coincidentally, as numerous surviving notarial contracts and testaments attest, sharecropping became widespread under the Nine, and was used by large-scale landowners, like Santa Maria della Scala and the abbey of Monte Oliveto, and on many smaller farms as well.

How do we reconcile the many rebellions and conspiracies with the claim that the Nine were one of the most stable and successful regimes of the age? One truism of history is that popular governments are usually chaotic and prone to rebellion. Unlike kings or popes who claim legitimacy based on their family or divine right, popular governments instead stake their legitimacy on the acquiescence of the people and their ability to provide justice. Inevitably, populations come over time to demand a greater voice in governance, while elites, unhappy with having to work through the popular institutions, sow chaos and dissent to overthrow the government and establish dynastic rule. This has been true from the time of Plato on, and it certainly was true in the city-states of northern Italy. We must remember that the era in which they ruled was extremely violent, and that all republican regimes across Italy faced regular rebellion from elite families who sought regime change. Moreover, as the following story illustrates, vendettas between families perpetuated cycles of violence that were incredibly difficult for cities to manage. During the era of the Nine, the head of the noble Tacco family, who controlled the territory between the Val di Chianti and Val d'Orcia, was sentenced to death by a Siennese judge. To avenge what he believed to be an unjust death sentence against his father, Ghino di Tacco went to Rome, where the judge had by then relocated, and killed him in front of terrorized bystanders. He then killed members of the Piccolomini and Tolomei families, as each had played a role in his father's execution, decapitated them, and brought their heads back to his family's impregnable fortress at Tintinnano.

As this story shows, the need to safeguard one's honor led to regular acts of violence that disrupted cities, destroyed lives, and made the task of providing justice that much more difficult for civic authorities. For all the talk of Christian civility, charity, and forgiveness, elite families were too often willing to resort to brutal violence and murder to defend their family honor, especially given that the concept of honor had both political and economic ramifications in late medieval society. After all, in an honor and shame society like medieval Siena, it was through the use of force and violence that elite families attained and maintained their privileged position in society.

Most of the other Italian republics proved to be short-lived and particularly chaotic, yet the Nine ruled for seventy years, more than an entire lifetime for most of the Siennese men and women alive at the time. When one considers all of the plots against them, as well as the larger political and social context within which they ruled, the Nine's longevity and their legacy of legal, architectural, and artistic achievement are all the more surprising and impressive. Let's turn to that legacy now.

The artistic legacy of the Nine

The history of Western art runs right through Siena, and the era of Siena's great artistic masters, beginning with Duccio in the decades around 1300 and continuing until the death of the Lorenzetti brothers in 1348, coincides with the seven-decade

rule of the Nine. The Sienese masters, along with their Florentine contemporaries, were the age's most important innovators of the visual arts and together, they laid the groundwork for the achievements of the Renaissance. Before examining the fall of the Nine, let's first explore the relationship between the Nine and the arts.

Certainly the Sienese were not the first to recognize the power of the visual arts. Devotional art had been a central feature of Christian culture for centuries, and it was widely believed that images of saints held special powers. Beginning in the thirteenth century with the Franciscans, art began to serve other functions as well, with narrative art depicting biblical stories or the miracles of saints becoming increasingly common as pedagogical tools, preaching aids, and propaganda that advanced certain institutional beliefs or claims. Over the second half of the thirteenth century, and with significant patronage and support from the popes in Rome, Assisi became the epicenter of artistic accomplishment, with the city's two great Franciscan churches serving as showcases for the great artists of the age. Florence's greatest late medieval artists, Cimabue and Giotto, both left masterpieces in Assisi, as did three of Siena's most important painters, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti, and Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Thus, it must be said, Siena's artistic accomplishments did not happen in a vacuum but were part of a broader socioeconomic and cultural shift in which society increasingly valued and patronized the visual arts.

Recent archeological discoveries under Siena's Duomo have demonstrated that monumental artistic production in the city predated the Nine by more than a decade. Now open to the public, the rooms under the Duomo offer an astonishing glimpse into the artistic tradition in the years before the Nine came to power. Though referred to as the "crypt" in the tourist literature today, the rooms originally served as a welcome center for pilgrims and the faithful visiting the city and include dozens of large frescoes dating to around 1275. It is most likely that pilgrims on their way to Rome on the Via Francigena would have visited these rooms upon their arrival in Siena and meditated on the richly decorated Old and New Testament stories before them. Attributed to Duccio's school, the frescoes are highly accomplished for the age, and the colors are unusually vibrant, as they've benefited from a lack of exposure to light for centuries now. Certain non-biblical stories were also included that catered to pilgrims, such as an apocryphal story about a fig tree bending over to feed the Holy Family during their exile into Egypt. After all, this story depicted the Holy Family on the move, far from home, looking for signs of God's grace, just like the pilgrims stopping in Siena on their way to Rome. Pilgrims were, in fact, the primary audience for these frescoes. This is an important point, and one that has been missed in scholarship on early Renaissance art: quite often, the intended audience for many of the works commissioned in this age was not primarily local citizens but instead pilgrims, traveling merchants, and other visitors to the city. In this case, the Sienese seem to have built this visitor's center specifically to attract tourists to the city and to encourage them to spend more time within the city before continuing their journey south.

All of this suggests that by the time the Nine came to power, Siena already had a sophisticated artistic tradition in which its artists were quite adept at adapting the

medium to advance the agenda of their patrons. What's often left unsaid is how effective the Sienese painters were at creating a brand, at turning Siena into the city of the Virgin. As we saw in the last chapter, the Sienese claimed Mary as theirs: as their protector, as their icon, as the focal point of their religious life and visual tradition. Over the course of the fourteenth century, the Sienese cemented their special relationship with Mary through creative retellings of the events of Montaperti. As we have seen, these accounts tell the story of how before the battle, the city's chosen representative, Buonaguida Lucari, together with the city's bishop, placed Siena formally under the Virgin's protection, by placing the keys to the city before an image of Mary on the high altar of the cathedral. Siena's victory at Montaperti, in this telling, was the result of the Virgin's intervention. Never mind that Siena's Marian cult dated back centuries; the Sienese refashioned the story of Montaperti into a foundation legend in which Mary had special and very real powers within Siena. The Sienese believed that paintings of Mary had real power, as the Virgin had already demonstrated a willingness to perform a specific miracle because of Sienese devotion to her image before Montaperti. This helps explain the relative uniformity in Sienese images of the Virgin Mary from the time of Guido da Siena in the 1260s until the fifteenth century: almost all depict Mary enthroned in the same color blue garment, with her head covered and slightly turned, and her eyes looking down. Paintings of Mary throughout the city's churches, in civic buildings, on the high altar of the cathedral, and in the frescoes found in the welcome center located under the cathedral, helped create a popular image of Siena as Mary's city.

The two works of art that best demonstrate the role of Mary under the Nine are also the city's two most famous Marian works: the *Maestà*s by Duccio and Simone Martini. Each of these works simultaneously worked to bolster the idea that Mary was the representative of Siena, present within her chosen city and assisting its leaders in creating a just society. The result of three years of work and completed in June 1311, Duccio's *Maestà* was recognized in its own day as a stunning achievement and a cause to be celebrated. The Sienese closed shops and held three days of festivities, which included a procession led by the Nine and the bishop to mark the painting's completion and its installation on the high altar. The image encapsulates beautifully the growing role of Mary within Sienese society and identity. Sitting on a throne holding Jesus, Mary is depicted as ruler, served by a court of famous Catholic saints, while Siena's four traditional local saints are in the foreground, submitting to the Virgin and petitioning her on behalf of the city. "Protect Siena and Duccio who made this painting," is inscribed on the base of Mary's throne, a remarkable statement of patriotism as well as one that elevates artistic achievement well beyond the craftsman-like role in which it had traditionally been treated. Taken together, we can see clearly that the *Maestà* had presented Mary as a unifying force for the Sienese, a powerful and regal figure who had real power in Siena and who would protect those who submitted to her. When one remembers that everyone subject to Sienese power was required to come to the cathedral (in a ceremony administered by the bishopric) on the feast day of the Virgin and offer a candle before the high altar of the cathedral, Mary's civic function for the Sienese becomes even clearer: she served as the unimpeachable face

of legitimate authority. To refuse to take part in the annual ritual act of submission to the city was not just seen as disobedience to the state but also as disobedience to Mary. Thus, in an age where power was regularly and violently contested, Duccio's *Maestà* bolstered the authority of the Nine and their claims of just rule.

Siena's claims about the Virgin were also part of a strategy that aimed to make Siena an essential destination on any Christian's pilgrimage to Rome. In fact, as we have seen, one of the chief obstacles Siena faced during the first half of the fourteenth century was that pilgrims were increasingly visiting Florence and bypassing Siena on their way to Rome, as the Via Francigena became only one of several paths that pilgrims could use to traverse the peninsula. Thus, the Sienese felt increasing pressure to make cultural investments to ensure that visitors would continue to flock to the city. Therefore, even beyond its local audience, the *Maestà*s, as well as the four Marian altarpieces that the city commissioned for the cathedral, as well as the aforementioned relics in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala also helped attract pilgrims to Siena. After all, though each of these works included Siena's local patron saints, Mary was the mother of God, venerated across Europe. At the time Duccio completed his work, it was the largest, most expensive, and most ornately decorated altarpiece on wood ever made. On the reverse side of the *Maestà*, Duccio painted a stunning 26-scene version of Christ's ministry and passion. In an age when visual art remained more powerful than the written text, there can be no doubt that having the opportunity to pray before the *Maestà* and to learn the stories of the passion through Duccio's brilliantly rendered narrative paintings would have been a highlight for many pilgrims, as it remains for many visitors to the city today.

Completed less than a decade later, Simone Martini's *Maestà* is even more groundbreaking in its adoption of religious iconography for political benefit. In 1315, the Nine commissioned Simone to paint in fresco a wall-spanning *Maestà* for the great room of the new town hall they were still in the process of constructing. His work takes Duccio's *Maestà* as its starting point, as both works include the same saints around an enthroned figure of the Virgin with child, with the city's four patron saints kneeling in the foreground. From there, Simone adapted Duccio's work to make it more politically salient. He makes Mary explicitly a queen: crowned, enthroned, and sitting under a *baldacchino*, which was a kind of canopy that European royals of the age used to visually mark their power. Jesus, standing in the Virgin's lap, holds a scroll whose message, from the biblical book of Wisdom, was clearly intended for Sienese leaders: "Love justice, you who rule." Mary also "speaks" in the painting. In response to the gifts of flowers presented by Siena's four local patron saints in the foreground, Mary says, "Take heed that I will make the devotees of your honest prayers content as you desire." She goes on to state that she delights in good counsel but will not show favor to those who are fraudulent or unjust, a direct warning to those who assembled before the painting in the meetings of the Grand Council. The border of the fresco includes more than a dozen medallions with images of Old Testament rulers and judges. Taken all together, Simone's *Maestà* brilliantly transforms Siena's traditional *Maestà*, exemplified in Duccio's masterpiece, into a mission statement for the city and its elites: as good servants of Mary, their appointed ruler who holds

actual power in Siena, they had an obligation to rule justly. In an age where power, authority, and legitimacy were regularly contested, the fresco made the case that justice was the responsibility of the state. Those in power had the support of Mary, but only for as long as they fulfilled their obligation to rule justly. Simone's monumental fresco gave the Sienese a town hall that rivaled any of its peers and served as a powerful backdrop for meetings of the General Council, setting a tone for the discourse: as citizens debated matters of public concern, they did so with Mary and her court watching over the proceedings.⁶

Of all of Siena's surviving masterworks, there is one piece, besides the works of Duccio and Simone Martini that we've just examined, that demand our attention: Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes of *Good and Bad Government*. Commissioned by the Nine in 1338 for the meeting hall of the Nine in their Palazzo, Lorenzetti's frescoes are undeniably one of the great achievements of the Sienese artistic tradition and one of the most innovative paintings of the fourteenth century. But they are most important for our purposes here because the frescoes serve as the greatest surviving testament to the Nine's vision, its understanding of the role of government in society, and of the ways in which the Nine used art to enhance its authority and legitimacy.

Completely taking up three large walls of the Nine's board room, Lorenzetti's frescoes offer an astonishingly sophisticated understanding of the role and qualities of good government, as well as its converse. In fact, the first wall that one sees now upon entering the Nine's chamber is the *Allegory of Bad Government*, which offers a warning of the perils of tyranny and unjust regimes. Far more than just a recapitulation of Christian vices, Lorenzetti here focuses on those evils that lead to broken societies and unjust governance, highlighting vices like greed, cruelty, intemperance, fraud, divisiveness, and violence against women. The rest of the wall shows the effects of bad government on society: the infrastructure is crumbling, as roads and bridges have fallen into decay owing to war and a lack of civic investment; the buildings are deteriorating; women and children are accosted in the streets by the tyrant's own men; the only business in town sells weapons of war; the countryside is in chaos, leading to insufficient foodstuffs for the city; the figure of Justice is bound, powerless in such a society. This fresco stood as a warning for those who governed the city and a reminder to its citizens that when rulers govern for their own benefit, civil society quickly falls apart and everyone suffers as a result. In particular, the fresco warned of the dangers of tyranny, which did, in fact, pose the gravest threat to all of the Italian city-states in the fourteenth century, suggesting that this fresco, in part, served to discourage viewers from supporting any wealthy families, such as the Tolomei or Salimbeni, who wished to topple the regime, by reminding them of the terrible consequences that would ensue.

The other two walls in the Sala della Pace, as the chamber of the Nine is called, depict the *Allegory of Good Government*, as well as the effects of good government in the state, shown here as both the city and the countryside. In contrast to tyranny, surrounded by his vices, the *Allegory of Good Government* features an old, bearded man enthroned, surrounded by nine virtues. Though the man initially looks like



FIGURE 3.3 Meeting chamber of the Nine and Lorenzetti's *Buongoverno* frescoes. General view of the Lorenzetti masterpiece in the Sala della Pace: on the left, *Tyranny and the Effects of Bad Government*; at center, the *Allegory of Good Government*; on the right, *The Effects of Good Government in the City and Countryside*

a king, he instead personifies the Sienese republic, represented in the shield and scepter he holds, typical of a sovereign, and the idea of *ben comune*, which is written at the foot of the fresco. Around his head are the initials for *Civitas Senarum*, *Civitas Virginis*, City of Siena, City of the Virgin. This figure, the representative of state power, gets his authority from the ruling class, depicted by 24 citizens in a procession, variously dressed in order to denote the social pluralism of the citizenry. They are linked together by a cord that originates from the figure of Justice and is carried through the figure of *Concordia*, shown with a working table and a planer with which she smooths out difficulties and differences, bringing everyone into harmony, as it were. From the figure of Concord, the cord is passed through the hands of the 24 before ascending to the hand of the personified figure of the Common Good, visually asserting that the Republic depends on the citizenry and that the government rules on its behalf. This part of the painting suggests that the Republic is sovereign in proportion to the level of concord between the citizens, based on the willingness of the citizens of various kinds accepting concord as the basis of the common good and the State.

Above on the left, there is the representation of Justice, illuminated by the figure of Wisdom, that is, by an understanding of things and of humankind. She promises punishment even by death, since *Securitas* demands it as an effect of good government. But she also promises to give each his or her own. In this way, the work

emphasizes the larger theme of justice, just like the work that Simone Martini had painted two decades earlier in the hall adjacent. Lorenzetti here emphasizes that the goal of good government is justice, and that justice is achieved when citizens put the common good before personal interests. Lorenzetti's work also emphasizes Siena's Roman past, through the inclusion of a she-wolf and her twins.

The figure of the common good is surrounded by nine virtues, innovatively depicted in ways that are revealing about the nature of each virtue. Included are the four cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence; the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity; as well as two specifically social or civic virtues: peace and generosity. In contrast to the nine vices that sustain tyranny, Lorenzetti's work argues that the common good is sustained through the appointment of wise, brave, and careful leaders who use their position to benefit Siennese society and not their own narrow faction.

The room's final frescoed wall is devoted to the effects of *Good Governance*, both in the city and the countryside. Here we see an idealized portrait of a thriving Siena, recognizable because of the inclusion of the cathedral and the city walls: the market is bustling; notaries attend to the people's needs; merchants sell their wares; students listen attentively to their professor's lecture; artisans and manufacturers are hard at work, as are the construction workers on scaffolding working to finish another monumental building in the city center. Like the city, the countryside is also thriving: roads and bridges are well maintained, allowing for travel and trade throughout the territory; farmers and other rural workers are depicted hard at work in the field, protected by a state that was dependent on the foodstuffs they produced; peasants filter into the city with their animals and wares, while citizens head out into the countryside, emphasizing the essential connection between urban and rural life. The lessons are clear: good governance is necessary for a society and its inhabitants to thrive. Businesses and farmers depend on order, the citizenry needs to have access to justice, and the city and its territory need to be secured.

Clearly, Lorenzetti's frescoes offer a brilliant synthesis of ancient political culture, particularly Cicero and Aristotle, as filtered through the lens of Lorenzetti's lived experience in one of the age's leading city-states. For the Nine, the frescoes functioned as a mission statement that affirmed their envisioned role in Siennese society and warned against supporting any individuals who might attempt to seize power for themselves or their associates. The Lorenzetti frescoes were also an important form of political propaganda by the Nine, especially given that the surviving evidence suggests that the Siennese public were familiar with the frescoes.⁷ Thus, the Nine had themselves subtly painted into the frescoes in important ways. For instance, in the *Allegory of Good Government*, exactly nine virtues serve the Common Good. Given that other contemporaneous depictions of the virtues include no more than the seven Cardinal and Catholic virtues, the inclusion of nine here was clearly intended to allude to the ruling regime.

But it is also our contention that the Nine had themselves depicted in the well-governed city on the adjacent wall, in the form of the nine dancing figures located in the middle of the cityscape. Scholars have puzzled over the dancing figures for

centuries. Especially puzzling is that the nine dancers are larger than the other figures in the image and the fact that the Nine had actually passed legislation that had banned public dancing! Another source of confusion has been their unusual style of dress, lack of cover for their head, and physical appearance, as the dancers are the only figures in the painting whose dress fails to reflect a particular social class; they're the only non-peasants whose heads are uncovered; and their androgynous appearance has led to interpretations that the dancers might be men. Given the prominent placement of the dancers and the fact that they are the largest figures in the fresco, scholars have long recognized that discovering the identity of the dancers is crucial to truly understanding the meaning of the painting.

As a result, there has been no shortage of attempts to interpret the identity and the significance of the dancers. Some have argued that perhaps they are meant to represent some sort of festival when women were allowed to dance; It has been suggested, based on their dress and appearance, that the women represent the children of the classical goddess Venus. Others have argued that the dancers represent the joy that results from living in a well-governed city. And several scholars, noting the genderless appearance of the dancers and the illegality of public dancing for women, have argued that those being depicted are men taking part in a "solemnly festive" medieval dance such as the *tripudium*. The act of dancing has also been interpreted as representative of civic harmony or as an expression of peace. While all of these theories are interesting, none succeeds in providing a satisfying explanation for the prominence of the oversized figures in the cityscape (whether they are women or men, or Venus' children or not). Just as importantly, no one has demonstrated how these central figures connect to the rest of a fresco cycle notable for the interconnectedness of its figures and where every figure symbolizes some larger idea or concept.

Now, let us return to our interpretation of the dancers: the nine dancers represent those nine virtues depicted on the adjacent wall and, by extension, the government of the Nine that, according to the frescoes, makes a peaceful and prosperous Siena possible. Incredibly, our interpretation is the first of its kind to connect the nine virtues on the adjacent wall and the nine maidens, dancing harmoniously to the music. This interpretation helps answer another question that has vexed scholars: in a painting funded by the government for their meeting room that depicts the peaceful city, *where* is the government? Our answer: front and center, larger than anyone else in the painting (a medieval convention signifying their oversized importance), in the heart of the city. Holding hands as a symbol of civic concord and dancing around a tenth figure (singing and playing the tambourine, while staring at the court of virtues on the adjacent wall), the nine dancers reflect the idea that the government of the Nine is what makes the well-governed, peaceful, and prosperous city possible by working together with a common purpose, guided by the virtues.

This interpretation places the government, as represented by the nine virtues, front and center in the depiction of the city and thus provides the crucial link

between the *Allegory of Good Government* and the peaceful cityscape. Such a reading of the fresco allows for a deeper understanding of the ways in which the frescoes were meant to function as propaganda for the ruling regime. As we have seen, there were many Sienese who disapproved of the regime of the Nine, from some of the city's guilds to the Siena's rich banking families who sometimes attempted to overthrow the government and establish a despotic regime in Siena. Lorenzetti's frescoes, therefore, were an attempt by the Nine to attract support for their regime by showing what society they were attempting to create and by presenting on the opposing wall, where war and destruction are ubiquitous and tyranny rules, a vision of what could happen if the regime fell. This was an important lesson for everyone in Siena, but especially for those newly elected to the Nine, as it served to remind them especially of the city's values and the risks of failing to uphold them.

The fall of the Nine

The regime would, in fact, fall only 15 years after Lorenzetti completed the frescoes. The tensions between the regime and other organized groups within the city, including its notaries and the *carnaioli*, had led the Nine to use force and repression, without resolving the underlying issues. As the crises accumulated, first a banking crisis, then some famines, followed by the collapse of the real estate market in the 1340s, the Nine found themselves with fewer allies and numerous angry groups who sought regime change. Then in 1348, the Sienese were forced to deal with the gravest tragedy in Siena's history: the arrival of the Black Death. The demographic losses are hard to quantify, but as the chroniclers make clear, they were devastating. The fact is that at the time, Siena was at the apex of demographic development, and numbered anywhere between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants, which fell sharply, with somewhere around half the population perishing from the Black Death. The city's population would not fully recover until the twentieth century.

The chronicler Agnolo di Tura provides a firsthand account of the overwhelming terror and desolation wrought by the Black Death in Siena:

Father abandoned child, wife husband, one brother another; for this illness seemed to strike through the breath and sight. And so they died. And none could be found to bury the dead for money or friendship. Members of a household brought their dead to a ditch as best they could, without priest, without divine offices. Nor did the [death] bell sound. And in many places in Siena great pits were dug and piled deep with the multitude of dead [...] And I, Agnolo di Tura, called the Fat, buried my five children with my own hands.⁸

If exact numbers of the dead aren't possible, other evidence helps illustrate the profound effects of the plague in Siena. There was an enormous increase in the amount of wealth left to the city's pious institutions, beginning with Santa Maria della Scala. Another consequence was that there was exponential growth in salaries, as the entrepreneurs of the merchant guild desperately scrambled for help in an environment in which the need for workers far outstripped the available manpower. Another major consequence of the plague was that urban development ground to a halt. An eloquent example is given to us in the borough of Santa Maria, located in the valley of Montone. As Siena's population was expanding in the first half of the fourteenth century, the Siennese government had incentivized new constructions projects in Montone to accommodate the influx of new settlers. While the records document a year's worth of work and the development of a settlement there, with the decimation wrought by the Black Death, the entire project was abandoned, as the city suddenly had far more residences than it needed for its shrunken population. Today, no trace remains from this expansion project. Perhaps the stone was taken elsewhere or perhaps the settlement was in part submerged under the flooding coastlines of the valley. Regardless, this episode and others like it help illustrate the ways in which the Black Death radically transformed the demographics, needs, and footprint of Siena in permanent ways.

As Siena struggled to recover from the Black Death, an explosive situation emerged that toppled the regime of the Nine once and for all. Led by the powerful magnate Salimbeni family, nestled in their family citadel on the Via Francigena (on the road today called the Banchi di Sopra), conspirators staged a rebellion to coincide with a visit by the Holy Roman emperor, Charles IV, of Luxembourg on 23 March 1355. Under the rallying cry "Death to the Nine and long live the Emperor," the rebels besieged the Nine, who were holed up in the communal palace while their homes were sacked. After three days of riots during which time the Palazzo Pubblico had been badly damaged, Emperor Charles intervened, deposing the Nine and calling for a commission of political reform. Just like that, the age of the Nine, an extraordinary period of political and institutional stability, came to an end.

The rebels could not imagine what would materialize after the episode was over. The Nine had been overthrown, but in the aftermath, it quickly became clear that Siena was composed of many competing factions, all of whom had their own agendas, allies, and enemies. As we will see in the next chapter, the overthrow of the Nine would bring about an era of instability, with the Siennese overthrowing another half-dozen different regimes over the next 50 years. While each was composed of any number of allied factions, some favoring the *popolo*, others the nobility, events would show that none had the political support or acuity to successfully shepherd Siena through the coming crises. In short, the fall of the Nine was followed not by a recovery but by a deterioration of economic, political, and social conditions from which the Siennese would not begin to recover until the fifteenth century. Let us now turn to that history.

Notes

- 1 The Arbia is merely an insignificant tributary of the Ombrone River.
- 2 CS, Agnolo di Tira del Grasso, 555.
- 3 Interestingly enough, x-rays have shown that the Sienese had one of their own artists alter Marcovaldo's work by repainting the Virgin's face at the turn of the fourteenth century in the style of Duccio.
- 4 The number of companies eventually settled at 42.
- 5 Cronaca senese [hereafter CS] attribuita ad Agnolo di Tura del Grasso detta cronaca Maggiore [hereafter Agnolo di Tura del Grasso], in *Cronache Senesi*, ed. Alessandro Lisini and Fabio Iacometti, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 15, 6 (Bologna 1931–1939) 253–564.
- 6 Another beautiful fresco in the same room as the *Maestà* has also been attributed to Simone Martini: a depiction of the mercenary Guidoriccio of Fogliano on horseback. While the fresco certainly looks like a work by Simone, modern scholars have raised serious doubt as to why, from a strictly historical point of view, Siena's government of merchants would have paid a mercenary homage while he was still alive, particularly at a time when military men had established themselves as tyrants in cities across Italy. It is possible that the fresco instead dates to the beginning of the fifteenth century after a period of sustained mercenary raids that had devastated Siena. In such a context, Guidoriccio would have been painted to serve as a symbol of a mercenary who fought on behalf of the Sienese during the city's golden years.
- 7 As surviving sermons indicate, the preacher San Bernardino referred to Lorenzetti's frescoes in his sermons in a way that suggests the public knew these frescoes well; the frescoes were not just seen by the ruling regime.
- 8 CS, Agnolo di Tura del Grasso, 555.

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4

RENAISSANCE SIENA AND THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC (1355–1555)

A fifty-year crisis: 1355–1404

The downfall of the Nine was, in hindsight, an inevitable development in Siense history. For the better part of the previous two centuries, each generation of Siense men and women had left the city in better condition than they had found it, with new buildings, bigger churches, easier access to potable water, stronger walls, and ever greater economic opportunity for those of talent or means. But such sustained growth and prosperity couldn't last forever, and numerous events had, by the middle of the fourteenth century, proven to be deeply problematic for the Siense politically, economically, and socially. Among the challenges Siena faced included the rise of Florence's economic and political power, the (related) shift away from the Via Francigena as the primary route for travelers through Tuscany, the difficulty in protecting Siense territory from mercenary raids, the collapse of the real estate market around 1340, and of course, most tragically, the loss of approximately half of the population from the Black Death of 1348. Each of these was detrimental to Siense prosperity and stability, but taken together, they were too much for any regime to sustain. With each of the city's five leading families, namely the Tolomei, Piccolomini, Saracini, Malavolti, and Salimbeni families, supporting the rebellion of 1355, the Nine fell, leaving the city in need of a new government that could turn affairs around, all while appeasing a citizenry that was divided into numerous powerful factions.

Unfortunately, the many challenges confronting the Siense could not be resolved easily through regime change. The same went for appeasing the competing demands of the city's political factions. After all, Siena had faced significant factional violence and failed attempts to overthrow the Nine back when things were good. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that what followed the collapse of the Nine was a half century of political instability, economic decline, and social unrest that would leave

Siena forever destined to live in Florence's shadow. In supporting the overthrow of the Nine, it seems almost certain that the powerful Salimbeni family had hoped to seize control of Siena just as other noble families, including the Ezzelini, Visconti, Scaligeri, da Polenta, and Malatesta, had done in other cities across Italy. But as we will see, while the Salimbeni were powerful enough to destabilize Siena's political structure, they lacked the support or means by which they could effectively rule the city. The result was that after the fall of the Nine, Siena faced a succession of short-lived regimes and regular outbreaks of rebellion and upheaval.

Following the collapse of the Nine, the Siennese established a new government called the Twelve, composed of 12 Priors of the Arts who represented the city's leading corporations and industries. The term "arts" included not only artisans and craftsmen such as cobblers, wool and silk workers, as well as wood and metal workers but also bankers, notaries, apothecaries, butchers (who themselves had recently rebelled against the Nine), and three other groups – the *ligrittieri*, *ritaglieri*, and *pizzicaioli* – none of which are now easily identifiable in terms of their occupation. Undoubtedly, the composition of the Twelve was far more representative of the broader Siennese population than the Nine had been. At the same time, even though the Twelve were not a government of the merchant and banking class as the Nine had mostly been, it is by no means clear that the Twelve, nor the various other short-lived regimes that ruled in the following decades, were an expression of less elevated classes. Instead, the surviving evidence suggests that the city's wealthiest and most powerful families continued to find ways to control civic affairs. Like with the Nine, election to high office remained tightly restricted and controlled under the Twelve. Formally, the nobility officially disavowed their rights to hold high office, just as they had been forced unceremoniously to do in 1277. Here in the second half of the fourteenth century, however, it is clear that the nobility accepted the restrictions placed on them from a position of strength, as they had their rejection registered with a laudatory tone within the official documents of the city, which served to highlight the nobility's unambitious position with respect to governing. While elite families like the Salimbeni may have dreamed of ruling the city as its sovereigns, by the second half of the fourteenth century, the majority of the nobility seems to have decided that they did not need political office to accomplish their secular aims: the corporate nature of late medieval and Renaissance families meant that as long as families had sufficient economic clout, social prestige, and access to mercantile and financial offices, they were able to shape civic legislation, diplomatic relations, and political affairs to benefit their interests without holding high office.

As might be expected given the instability and frequent regime change of the era, little evidence survives that provides meaningful insight about the governance of the Twelve. In certain aspects, there was institutional continuity, as elections continued to be held bimonthly to choose 12 (up from nine) new officials to serve their term on the Concistoro. Moreover, the principle offices of the state remained the same until the fall of the Twelve in 1368. The Twelve also set prices and salaries and oversaw the implementation of economic sanctions, just as the Nine had done before. But in other ways, the Twelve sought to distance themselves from the Nine.

Most importantly, they banned families of the Nine from serving in the new government. This was done by compiling a list of those families who had served on the Nine, labeling them as a political group known as the *monte* of the Nine, and then prohibiting its members from playing a role in city governance. In a world where elite power was rooted in familial solidarity, such a policy of banning those families who had served the Nine was aimed at changing the composition of the city's political establishment once and for all.

Another important change within Sienese politics was that after the Nine, it was no longer required that the Captain of the People be a foreigner. While traditionally, the desire for impartiality had led the Sienese to demand an outsider, increasingly, from the time of the Twelve until the communal reforms at the end of the eighteenth century, the Captain of the People was selected from the ranks of the Sienese political elite. With this change came another, as the Captain of the People was given the authority to preside over the General Council, which allowed him to maintain great power over local affairs. The elevation of the Captain of the People came at the expense of the office of the *podestà*, who was increasingly marginalized. While previously, the *podestà* had been the most powerful elected official in the city, by the time of the Twelve, the *podestà* was little more than the city's chief administrator of justice. With the roles of the *podestà* circumscribed, the Captain became like a *Gonfaloniere* of justice, charged with overseeing the internal security of the city and keeping the public order.

Whatever the merits of the government of the Twelve, they were unable to appease the citizenry nor deal with the systemic problems that the city continued to face. In addition to devastating and costly mercenary raids, the city was forced to contend with numerous other challenges including an ongoing financial crisis and rebellions by several communities under Sienese control in the hinterlands, as well as fighting amongst the nobility that frequently enveloped the city in chaos and violence. By the fall of 1368, some nobles created an alliance with representatives of the *monte* of the Nine and together deposed the Twelve. To legitimate their coup, they appealed to a twelfth-century Sienese custom of appointing 13 consuls (*consoli*) in times of crisis, and these newly appointed consuls were then given the authority and power to reorganize the city's institutions.

Unfortunately, beyond agreeing that the Twelve had to be replaced, the factions that now controlled the city could not agree on how to share power within the new regime, leading to the rise and fall of several extremely short-lived regimes between September 1368 and January 1369. For a brief period, the Salimbeni even managed to gain the support of the city's working class in order to have themselves appointed lords of Siena. Not only were important castles in the Amiata and Maremma regions given over to them, but the entire family was granted membership rights in the city council, with the same privileges that had been provided to the other legislators. An oath of loyalty of a feudal nature was also instituted in favor the Salimbeni family, putting them on par with the emperor. Those who refused to swear allegiance were viewed as enemies of the regime. The Salimbeni had everything: castles and soldiers, money and grain, and official titles that made them lords of Siena. But despite their initial support of the Salimbeni, ultimately

the *popolo* turned on them, and with the aid of a group calling themselves the Reformers (who were allied with members of both the Twelve and the Nine), they undermined the Salimbeni and forced them to flee the city. What followed was predictable: the Salimbeni used their considerable power to intermittently disrupt and destabilize the city, while those factions in power struggled to create a unified reform program and a successful coalition government. When all was said and done, six different regimes had managed to gain control of the city only to be toppled, all within a period of four months!

Despite the chaos of the last years of the 1360s, the Siennese did manage to institute one particular reform that would prove lasting and useful for the city. In 1369, city leaders created a new governing body meant to temper the whims of the General Council. They established a new special council that consisted of everyone who had previously held high office in Siena, and this committee was given the authority to decide which affairs would be debated by the General Council. Since magnates were still excluded from Siena's highest offices, this special council was composed of only members of the *popolo*, and as a result, this preliminary assembly of previous officeholders took the name Council of the Popolo. While this new body could not bring an end to the myriad challenges Siena faced, the Council of the Popolo would in time become an important Siennese institution, as it created a sort of Siennese senate and allowed the city to benefit from the experience of those who understood the interworkings of the city's political landscape.

Despite such reforms, affairs in Siena remained difficult and unpredictable throughout the 1370s. What began as a labor dispute between wool workers and their employers in 1371 quickly escalated, ultimately leading to an uprising that nearly toppled the government. Another devastating round of plague hit Siena in 1374. Throughout that decade, the Salimbeni refused to quietly accept their ouster and continued to stir up urban discontent, managing, by 1385, to force the coalition Reform government that controlled Siena into exile, leading to further instability and regime change.

Thirty years had passed since the fall of the Nine, and in that time, the Siena had struggled mightily to regain its political footing. Florence grew increasingly concerned about the state of affairs in Siena: while the two cities had been enemies for centuries, Florence feared that an increasingly powerful new power, Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan, might try to use Siena as a bridgehead that would allow him to subdue all of Tuscany. As a result, Florence helped broker an agreement with the Siennese that allowed for them to establish another coalition government, this time composed of Siena's major political parties, namely the Twelve and the Nine, and a new party representing the interests of the *popolo*. Similarly to the situation with King Manfred and the Ghibelline cause more than a century before, Siena had again become a pawn in a larger game, in this case, owing to its strategic importance to both Florence and Milan.

By 1389, Gian Galeazzo Visconti compelled the Siennese to forge an alliance with Milan, and within a decade, this alliance had turned to subjugation. While the Milanese allowed Siena to maintain its institutions, Gian Galeazzo's trusted envoy

held unchecked military and financial control over the city. After centuries of independence, Siena found itself no longer in control of its own destiny. Out of fear of rebellion, the Milanese cracked down on public celebrations, such as prohibiting the *serragli*, an ancient practice whereby citizens good-naturedly attempted to block the passage of a bride, escorted by her father through the city streets, to her groom's house. Also, in their efforts to govern Siena, the Milanese gave increased latitude to the nobility to pursue their own interests, knowing that no rebellion could succeed without their support. Not all noble families benefited, as the Malavolti family proved to be a casualty of the Milanese age. Their subversive pro-Florentine position and attempts to rally support against the regime led to their condemnation as traitors, the destruction of their once majestic castles on the Via Francigena, and their exile from Siena. Some of the Malavolti fled to Teggiano in the region of Salerno, in the orbit of the powerful Sanseverino family. It would take more than half a century before some members of the Malavolti family would again obtain public positions in Siena. On the whole, however, the period of Milanese rule proved to be short-lived and not particularly detrimental for Siena, as fate intervened: Gian Galeazzo died prematurely in 1402.¹ The Siennese were able to regain their independence within a few months, and in time, they came to view their subjugation to the Visconti as little more than a momentary loss of freedom within the Republic's long history.

Siena in the 1400s: consensus and stability

In 1403, after a half century of instability, the Siennese finally managed to establish a stable coalition government. Following an attempted coup by the Twelve, the other parties, or *monti*, managed to put down the rebellion and come together to form a tripartite government composed of the Nine, the *Popolo*, and the Reformers. This coalition government would last for almost 80 years, allowing Siena a level of political security and stability that the city hadn't experienced since the fall of the Nine in 1355. Unfortunately, the great challenges to the city could not be resolved through good governance alone: the recurrence of plague kept the population from recovering, while Siena found itself too often having to deal with the devastating consequences of foreign incursions as well as nearly annual raids by mercenary troops. Yet the coalition government formed in 1403 did manage to put an end to one of the most regular sources of conflict within the city: the Salimbeni family. After half a century of failed plots to make themselves lords of Siena, the Salimbeni were finally defeated once and for all. The tripartite government seized the Salimbeni family tower and much of the family's property in the city, and the family was forced to disperse. Within a few generations, the name Salimbeni, once the most powerful noble family in Siena, disappeared from the city's records.

More broadly, things had changed dramatically in Siena in the time since the rule of the Nine, and the Siennese sought to adjust. The cascading disasters Siena had faced caused a demographic collapse in Siennese territory that almost laid bare some weaker, more distant areas to such a point that they needed to be militarily

and administratively restructured. Some places that were important centers for military reasons before, like Paganico, Buonconvento, and San Quirico, faded in importance as the Siennese adapted to their diminished circumstances. But the news wasn't all bad. In fact, in certain directions, Siena managed to expand during the fifteenth century. For instance, Siena finally gained a firm grasp of Sarteano and Chiusi, toward the Val di Chiana, both of which Siena had long coveted in order to prevent the Florentines from controlling the Val d'Orcia. The same thing happened at Piancastagnaio along the Amiata, and at Radicofani along the Via Francigena, where the road was modified in order to favor the inhabitants there who had shown loyalty to Siena. Toward the sea, the Siennese had come to control the territory all the way to Capalbio, which became a stable border town for Tuscany.² Even the Argentario was bolstered, along with Port'Ercole, an important military port during the mid-fifteenth century when Alfonso of Aragon, aided by the Siennese, used it as a base of operations in his efforts against Florence. North of the city was Monterotondo Marittimo, the farthest edge of Siena's territory north by the sea, which had proven to be a difficult boundary to maintain ever since Florence's conquest of Pisa and its territory in 1406. The Siennese family known as d'Elci continued to control these sparsely populated expanses. The Siennese also strengthened their fortifications at Montalcino and fortified Petriolo, the site of famed thermal baths, located along the main road toward Grosseto.³ In the direction of Florence, the Siennese attempted to expand their territory even farther. In fact, they managed to temporarily gain control of territory that stretched all the way to Colle Val d'Elsa and the Castellina in the aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478. But almost immediately, the Florentines were able to erase Siena's gains, making Monteriggioni, Villa a Sesta, and San Gusmè the stable boundary between Florentine and Siennese territory.

Siena controlled significant territory, accounting for around a third of Tuscany. However, as the fifteenth-century city had only 15,000–20,000 inhabitants, the Siennese were forced to adopt a friendlier policy toward those autonomous communes within Siennese territory that had significant populations and were located relatively far from Siena. The residents of numerous communities like Abbazia San Salvatore, Chianciano, Sarteano, Grosseto, and Massa Marittima managed to compel their Siennese lords to grant them certain fiscal privileges and political rights, such as the right to create their own statutes and the right to propose which Siennese official they wanted to govern their community on behalf of Siena. Where the Siennese could, they continued to rule their smaller rural communities as they had before. Without the ability to threaten rebellion, these communities were subject to an extra *contado* tax and had to follow certain rules that limited their autonomy. This meant, for example, that communities could not prevent the Siennese from constructing fortifications in their territories, and that the Siennese inserted themselves in matters of concern within these communities, on matters ranging from the contracts of sharecroppers to the organization of smaller farms. Sharecropping contracts were a regular feature of life in the Siennese *contado*, as they were across Italy for centuries. Instead of

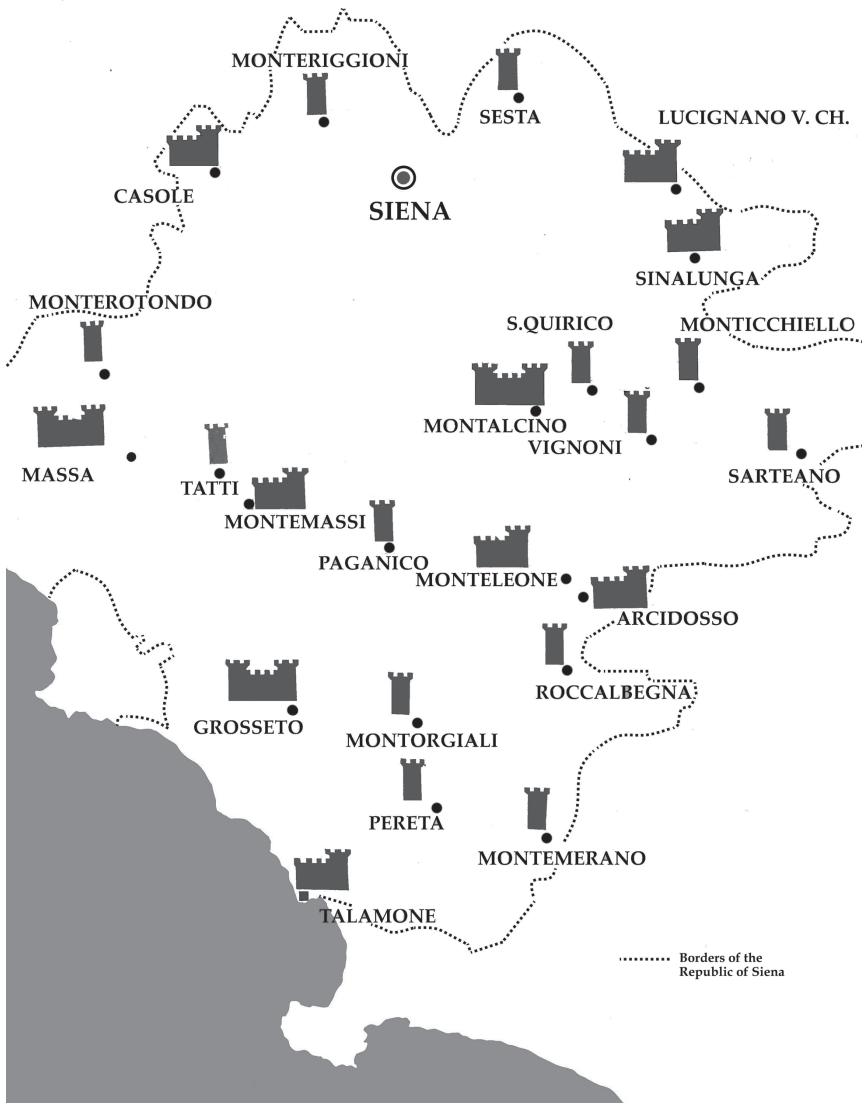


FIGURE 4.1 Sienese fortifications, 1406. The Sienese built, acquired, reinforced, or expanded numerous towers and castles on the borders of Sienese territory. This map shows the locations of Siena's fortifications at the beginning of the fifteenth century

locals working their own land, sharecroppers worked someone else's land and in return had to pay a percentage of their yield. Owing to the unpredictability of harvests, sharecropping contracts often trapped peasant families deeply in debt for generations. Short-term sharecropping contracts, typically lasting three to five years, were also used with migrant labor, as there was always a need for labor in the fields of Tuscany.

During this time, wealthy Siennese citizens eagerly sought public appointments in those territories where they possessed land, unscrupulously weakening communal structures and instituting sharecropping throughout the territory. In those places that retained local property ownership, even of modest size, local communities remained strong, as was the case for the Amiata and Maremma regions, where their distance from the capital city allowed local inhabitants to resist the rise of sharecropping. Some communities remained firmly under Siennese control throughout the fifteenth century, including Massa Marittima, Campagnatico, Batignano, and Montepescali. Others instead saw the expansion of a different economic system where large tracts of land were left fallow and then periodically leased for grazing purposes. In 1419, Siena reorganized the department that oversaw the transition of land in the Maremma region from farming to the grazing of sheep that headed there from the Apennines in winter. While grazing was more profitable than farming, the agricultural communities suffered in the long term from the unintended consequences of the changes made to the land. Most consequentially, malaria found an ideal habitat in those lands, leading to a serious health crisis for inhabitants. One can only imagine the trepidation Siennese officials felt upon being appointed to serve for a time on behalf of Siena in the distant, malaria-infected communities of the Maremma. Yet whatever their concerns, members of Siena's three leading political parties (*monti*) were required to serve stints throughout the Siennese *contado* whenever called upon, since the territory was a vital part of the wealth and security of Siena. From those places closest to the city, where there was an abundance of sharecropping farmhouses, the Siennese managed to obtain foodstuffs to feed the urban populace, while the Maremma region proved useful to Siena, despite the health risks, as it gave Siena a buffer: any invading armies would have to cover a large and secured area before reaching the capital.

This "realm," as the territory Siena controlled was often called, was so important and such a part of Siennese identity, that Siennese art spread throughout region, not only in terms of the architectural style of rural structures but also in the embellishment of rural churches. Owing to the many crises that had devastated the region, the Maremma became a land of immigration. Its fortifications, churches, art, and residential structures all evinced an aura of Siena and Siennese power.

Siena's political system in the fifteenth century

From 1403 until 1480, Siena's three leading parties, the Nine, the Popolo, and the Reformers, shared power through a fairly elaborate system of rotating offices. Every eight years, the Signoria held elections where they selected a large batch of candidates eligible to serve on the Council of the Popolo. The city's 42 popular associations chose 480 individuals, with a proportional number coming from each *monte* and *terzo*. Then, from the pool of eligible individuals, nine names were selected on a bimonthly basis to serve on the Council of the Popolo. While such a system encouraged political participation from the citizenry, electing new leaders six times a year made it difficult for the Siennese government to create and pursue

long-term objectives. The council also suffered from high rates of absence by its members, as many frequently missed meetings because of work or travel obligations, as well as pressing business matters or serious illness. As a result, decisions by the Council of the Popolo were often made in an unpredictable and haphazard manner.

Life as a political figure in fifteenth-century Siena was filled with angst, large stretches of time away from home, and years of striving with no guarantees. Regularly, Sienese politicians were appointed to govern over a small community in the hinterland where they were required to live for several months at a time. Rejecting such an appointment could lead to individuals being marginalized, meaning that Sienese politicians often felt compelled to take jobs they had no interest in, with the hope that such positions would ultimately lead to leadership positions within Siena.

Dissatisfaction was widespread, and a good number of the disaffected were wealthy and influential. Frustrated by their exclusion and the government's unwillingness to reform what many viewed as a broken system, in 1456, numerous nobles, including Antonio Petrucci, a learned and powerful member of the Nine, swore a pact to overthrow the government and create a new regime. While the details of the plot remain unknown, it is certain that they wanted to give the system stability without turning Siena into a despotic Signoria. To do so, they wanted the government to limit the power of the Council of the Popolo, which numbered almost 800 members, and to reinstate the many noble families who remained excluded from public office. But before the coup could be launched, the plot was uncovered, leading the government to put many of the conspirators to death. In the years that followed, the nobility were increasingly visible, often through the machinations of Siena's most famous pope, Pius II, who worked hard to elevate the standing of his kin, the powerful Piccolomini family. So concerned was the ruling regime about the effects of the pope's efforts that in 1462, the Sienese demanded that Pope Pius stop meddling in the city's political affairs. Siena's coalition government survived the rebellion of 1456 and would rule until 1480, but the citizenry grew increasingly frustrated with the political landscape. Siena's ruling coalition was increasingly reliant on Florence, which earned them ever greater hostility from their political opponents, particularly following the loss of Siena's short-lived conquests of Colle Val d'Elsa and Castellina.

The nobility finally managed to upend the political system in the 1480s. Together with the *monti* of the Twelve, the nobles were admitted into the government, while the Reformers who had persecuted the rebels of 1456 were kicked out. Nobles in Siena and beyond praised the change, which they believed would make possible a stable patrician government capable of ending the incivility and factious infighting. Over the course of that decade, Siena's *monti* negotiated with each other in an attempt to create a lasting and stable government. They found little success, leading many in Siena to view republican governments as inherently divisive and unable to meet the demands of the age. For instance, following an embarrassing defeat that Siena suffered at the hands of Volterra in 1481, the Sienese noble Bartolomeo Benvoglianti confessed that he desired for Lorenzo de' Medici to intervene in Siena, arguing that Lorenzo was the "lover of Tuscan liberty." Before

the decade had ended, Siena would in fact succumb to an unofficial tyranny by a Siennese elite when the leader of the Nine, Pandolfo Petrucci, seized power in 1487. But before we turn to rise of the Petrucci family dynasty, let's first look at fifteenth-century Siennese society and culture, the century when the Renaissance came to Siena and left the city forever changed.

The Renaissance in Siena: culture and the arts, society and the *contrade*

Following the political instability and economic and demographic decline of the second half of the fourteenth century, the new century brought a return to some semblance of normalcy for the Siennese. At the same time, by 1400, Siena could no longer be counted among the leading cities of Europe, even if its families remained prominent players in European culture and its relative wealth allowed its citizens a decent standard of living. It was in the fifteenth century when the Siennese first began consolidating their legacy. No longer expanding in a meaningful way, the Siennese turned inward, establishing the Office of Adornment (Ufficio dell'Ornato) to beautify the city and create an urban fabric that was unified, embellished, and seemingly permanent. This office played a key role in shaping the Siena of today. Property owners were encouraged, not without the threat of fines, to keep their urban buildings well maintained, restore their properties and facades when necessary, and build in a way that matched the architectural style of the city. This office also paved Siena's streets and made them, as well as the string of palaces that lined them, more linear. Moreover, they sought to eliminate the many walkways that protruded out into the streets, obscuring the street view and making passage difficult for the many convoys that passed through the streets. In the fifteenth century, palaces were built with stone and embellished with lowered arches and decorations that demonstrated the Renaissance taste for the ancient, in the fibers of the Gothic tradition, a style that is at once simple and elegant. The government used curious means to beautify the city, such as when they gave a member of the Marsili family a paid government position in the *contado* so that the family would have the financial means to restore a large family castle located near the cathedral that had fallen into disrepair.

The beautification efforts were an important part of the city's efforts to continue to attract pilgrims, dignitaries, and tourists. The Siennese hired Michelangelo, Raphael, and Donatello, as well as the great Pinturicchio to work on projects for the cathedral, as many brilliant works of art continued to be made in Siena throughout the Renaissance, even if they were no longer at the hands of Siennese artists. Civic leaders made efforts to portray Siena as a republic of historic importance, even placing statues of Cato the Younger and the Roman consul Brutus in the marketplace.

The life and reign of Enea Silvio Piccolomini is instructive. Born in the Siennese countryside, he spent much of his early life wandering around Europe, even writing a book on the subject. A complicated and ambitious man, he supported placing limits on the power of the popes at the Council of Basil, only to reverse his position as he climbed the ranks of the clergy. Shortly after his appointment as Bishop of

Siena, his newfound support of papal absolutism helped make him pope (1458–1464), and he took the name Pius II. As pope, he did everything he could to elevate Siena's profile and attract interest in the city. He made Caterina di Giacomo di Benincasa, the famed fourteenth-century mystic and Dominican tertiary better known as Catherine of Siena, a saint, elevating her cult and inspiring millions to venerate her relics in Siena on their pilgrimage to Rome. In a move that most certainly would have angered the Florentines, Pius gave Siena a relic containing the right arm of Florence's patron saint, John the Baptist. As this was believed to be the arm and hand that baptized Jesus himself, this was an incredibly important relic to which Europe's faithful and the curious flocked. Pius II also elevated Siena to the rank of archbishopric and helped fund numerous civic projects in the city, including the elegant loggia that he built on behalf of the Piccolomini family. All in all, Pius worked to add prestige to his native city by making Siena more appealing and attractive to its inhabitants and visitors.

Siena, with 15,000–20,000 inhabitants, was a minor reality when juxtaposed to behemoths like the Kingdom of Naples, the Papal State, or Milan. Still, despite its diminished size and political importance, the city was not irrelevant, thanks largely to its wealth and beauty. The Siennese continued to improve their city, making the streets cleaner, the buildings more attractive and unified, and inspiring contemporaneous visitors to the city to exclaim, "Siena is of great fame in the world today / A city of magnificence and wealth / adorned with beauty / of good governance and of pleasant citizenry." While Siena was no Florence, which boasted twice the public revenue of its smaller Tuscan rival, the quality of life was comparable between the two cities, given that Florence's population was four or five times greater than that of the Siennese.

Moreover, despite the small size of its citizenry, fifteenth-century Siena was a cosmopolitan city where one could find people from every part of Europe. Surviving sources speak of a Spaniard who became a hotelier and employed a young Hungarian man, and of a notorious Florentine bandit who was able to easily integrate himself into Siena and even invest in the public debt. The Via Francigena continued to bring many pilgrims from all parts of Europe and all walks of life to Siena, which benefited the city economically, even if the Siennese never failed to complain about the immoral behavior of the travelers. Stories survive incriminating Slavs for partaking in riots, a German for having stolen from a Bohemian cleric, a bisexual Lombard man who betrayed the mercenary Facino Cane and became an executioner, and a notary from Montelaterone who was accused of sexual escapades with an unnamed widow. There were Catalanian merchants, Lombard builders, and members of the papal curia. In general, the Siennese accepted foreigners but remained cautious, even instituting the practice of escorting foreigners who were deemed threatening or otherwise unwelcome to the border of Siennese territory. The evidence from Renaissance Siena serves as a reminder that visitors, foreigners, migrants, merchants, and travelers have long been an important part of the fabric of the city.

Another important feature of Renaissance Siena was the vast number of religious institutions, and by extension, the significant number of Siennese men and



FIGURE 4.2 The Palazzo Piccolomini and the Loggia del Papa. Pope Pius II funded the construction of the Loggia as a gift to Siena but dedicated it to his relatives; on the right, the Piccolomini Renaissance palace, constructed at the turn of the sixteenth century

women who lived and worked in these institutions. In fact, a surviving contemporaneous list offers a comprehensive overview of the sacred institutions of the city, all of which received a donation of salt from the commune. The list is in fact too long to mention here; instead, it's enough to mention just those religious institutions that no longer exist, or that have been transformed into government offices, shops,

restaurants, and university buildings: Santa Concezione, San Lorenzo, San Tommaso and Petronilla degli Umiliati in Piazza del Sale, Monteoliveto, Ognisanti at Palazzo Bichi, San Niccolò, and Badia Nuova, along with a number of churches including San Bartolomeo, Santa Croce, San Galgano, San Desiderio, San Maurizio (called Samoreci), San Marco, San Prospero, San Sigismondo, and Sant'Egidio.

It is important to speak here of a darker side of Sienese society during the Renaissance, namely the presence of many slave girls – from Calabria and Corsica to the Near East and Russia – who were acquired in order to lessen the workload of the various *monne* (female servants) who worked in the homes of the wealthy. Slaves also worked as sex workers in Siena, as attested to in numerous criminal cases involving Sienese men and slaves accused of partaking in “visits” where sexual acts took place. Many Sienese slave owners sought to control the sexuality of their women slaves. This was especially true given that the value of a slave dramatically decreased if she were violated. For instance, if a slave gave birth, her value was reduced to 33 percent. One particular way in which slaves affected Sienese society was through their role in the criminal justice system as witnesses. Like in ancient Rome, slaves were allowed to give legal testimony in Renaissance Siena and were tortured if they remained reticent; slaves could also be given over as collateral.

Slaves in Siena had a higher market value than the prices then current on the square in Genoa, owing to Siena's distance from naval ports and limited supply. In some instances, Sienese slaves were released, though the available records also make clear that slaves were typically freed only after they had, in some way or other, become “used.” There were exceptions. In a particularly remarkable case, the powerful rector of Santa Maria della Scala, an assiduous attendee ex officio of religious ceremonies, ended up marrying his own slave following the death of his wife. Together they had a son and daughter. Their son wound up marrying a member of the noble Ugurgieri family, and he eventually became a member of the Signoria and Captain of the Popolo.

Though the Monte dei Paschi wouldn't become a significant institution in Siena until the seventeenth century, the bank traces its origins to 1472. For it was in that year that the Sienese established the Monte di Pietà, the first *monte* of its kind in Siena, modeled upon a similar institution established in Perugia a decade earlier. Stirred in part by the anti-Semitic vitriol that certain Franciscan preachers were using to stir up the whole of Italy, the Sienese opened the Monte and offered small collateral loans as a way to avoid Jewish bankers. Not only did the preachers defame Jews as notorious usurers and the killers of Christ, Jews were also accused of performing “ritualistic homicides” and human sacrifices during Passover. Such bigotry was used to argue that instead of using Jewish money lenders, Christians should be allowed to lend money, despite those biblical prohibitions against usury that had kept Christians out of the money-lending business for centuries. While the ban on usury was not officially overturned, the Monte got around such prohibitions by charging those who borrowed a fee that corresponded to the cost of managing their account. This was in effect a loophole, as it gave the Monte the

ability to collect interest under a different name. Such a novel policy was met with skepticism, and the arrangement didn't receive papal approval until the time of Medici pope Leo X a half century later.

The fifteenth century also marks the time when the *contrade* first emerged in a reconcilable form. While there's evidence of two modern *contrade* existing in the fourteenth century, Bruco and Oca, the following century saw the emergence of the *contrade* of Chiocciola, Drago, Giraffa, and Onda, and their participation in competitive games and hunts. By 1506, the number of *contrade* had reached 12, and included Aquila, Istrice, Montone, Nicchio, Selva, and Lionfante (now Torre). Many of the *contrade* took their names from the city's 42 official "popular" districts or companies.

The growing importance of the *contrade* occurred precisely as the city's republic was collapsing. Why? As we will see in the coming chapters, the *contrade* offered the Sienese community a say in affairs of some importance, as well as a purpose and support network that was firmly divorced from the political sphere. Only by staying away from the political machinations of the day could the *contrade* survive the end of the Republic and the long period of political servitude that would follow.

Late fifteenth-century Sienese culture changed in ways that reveal some of the underlying socioeconomic conditions of the age. In 1472, the government passed new legislation that prohibited the majority from wearing certain types of clothing that was demarcated for the nobility, a clear sign that the power of the nobility was on the rise in the waning years of the Sienese Republic. After all, wasn't this the negation of egalitarian and "popular" medieval culture? The next year would provide additional evidence that Sienese values were changing in favor of the nobility: the highest fiscal officers in charge of the Gabella commissioned a painting as the cover for their own accounting records. The subject for the commissioned painting in 1473 was a private wedding between members of the Sanseverino and Malavolti families.⁴ While seemingly innocuous, this painting marked the first time that a private event involving private citizens holding no elected office had ever been depicted in a public painting in Siena. The nobility was ascendant, leading to the political crises of the 1480s and the tyranny of the Petrucci, to which we now turn.

From Pandolfo Petrucci to the war for Siena (1487–1555)

Upon the collapse of the governing coalition in 1480, Siena's power blocs wrestled for control. In the chaotic years that followed, Siena's *monti* made several attempts to establish new regimes, even resorting to exiling the Nine in 1483 out of fear of their growing strength. Those fears proved to be well grounded, as the Nine, under the control of Pandolfo Petrucci, clandestinely reentered the city in 1487 and seized control of the mechanisms of civic governance. A member of the powerful Petrucci clan, Pandolfo had served as a political tribune for Sienese security and as head of the Camera del Commune, a position that put Pandolfo in charge of the city's assets, including its fortresses and armaments.

Though Pandolfo would maintain the semblance of republican governance in Siena, he aggressively sought to secure his position and make himself prince of Siena. The invasion of Charles VIII of France in 1494 accelerated Pandolfo's plans, allowing him to crack down on civil liberties in the name of security, leading to the marginalization of republican councils and the placement of ever greater power in his hands. He quickly consolidated his power, seizing his brother's fortune upon his death in 1497, and then marrying into the powerful Borghese family in order to form an alliance with his father-in-law, Niccolò Borghese, and gain near total control of the Sienese state. Niccolò soon came to regret his decision to help Pandolfo and conspired with other Sienese elites to kill him. Pandolfo caught wind of the assassination plan and had Niccolò and his fellow conspirators killed. Using the recent threats to his life as his excuse, in the name of national security, Pandolfo finally managed to seize complete control of political power in 1500.

At the same time, like many tyrants, Pandolfo recognized the political benefit of formally maintaining and showing respect for Siena's republican institutions. Thus, despite the fact that he had transformed the government into a tyrannical regime and family dynasty that would survive his death in 1512, he always publically presented himself as the defender of the Sienese Republic. Historians have always found his legacy to be complicated. Ruthless and often violent, Pandolfo set in motion the collapse of the city's representative institutions, making it easier for later princes to find acceptance in Siena, beginning with Cosimo de Medici a half century later. On the other hand, the collapse of republican regimes was the rule, not the exception, in sixteenth-century Europe, the age of Niccolò Machiavelli and of increasingly powerful and centralized states under the control of princes and kings. In other words, the collapse of the Sienese Republic was, in many ways, inevitable. And judged on the merits of his tenure as prince of Siena, Pandolfo oversaw an economic recovery in the city, patronized the city's cultural institutions, including the university and its college, and constructed beautiful palaces throughout the city, including the luxurious palace that still dominates the square of the Baptistry today. Siena's leading citizens seem to have accepted Pandolfo's tyranny out of self-interest. By eliminating fair and open elections and curbing the authority of the city's councils, Siena's political elite could rest assured that they and their children would remain prominent and wealthy members of society. But such an agreement required that they support the Petrucci dynasty, even if it came at the expense of the overall well-being of the Sienese state. The idea of *ben comune*, the pursuit of the common good that had been the central theme of Lorenzetti frescoes two centuries before, was replaced by self-preservation as a political worldview.

Thus, Pandolfo helped limit class mobility in Siena, allowing those families allied with the Nove to create a permanent ruling oligarchy led by the Nove, who governed alongside Pandolfo's tyranny. Given the nature of this alliance between Pandolfo and Siena's elite families, along with the fact that the elite controlled the nascent printing press industry in Siena, it is not surprising to find that in 1502, the first book ever published in Siena, *The Victory at Montaperti* (*La sconfitta di Monte Aperto*), was dedicated to Pandolfo. The Petrucci family despotism would

survive Pandolfo's sudden death in 1512, as three of Pandolfo's sons and one of his grandnephews would all rule Siena in succession over the next 13 years. Only in 1525 would the Siennese manage to bring an end to the Petrucci era when they exiled Pandolfo's youngest son, Fabio, as well as the party of the Nine. The Nove's response to their exile is revealing: rather than accept their exile or attempt to win back Siena on their own, they aligned with Pope Clement VII, himself a member of the Medici family. Together, they plotted to attack Siena and take the city through force of arms. In July 1526, as the Siennese prepared for the pope's armies to attack, the Siennese reenacted the ceremony of ceremonial submission to the Virgin Mary that they knew so well from the Montaperti legends of the day. On 25 July 1526 the Siennese defended their city against the pope's army, north of the city at the Porta Camollia, and by the end of the day, the Siennese had emerged victorious. It would prove to be Siena's last great military victory and would be commemorated in a magnificent painting in the Church of San Martino.

Siennese had won the war, but new sixteenth-century technological advances had created armaments that were far more destructive than ever before, leaving the city battered and badly damaged. Siena still possessed a large and wealthy state, but its ruling class was tearing itself and the city apart by internal mortal conflict. Writing of Siena in the 1520s, the famed contemporary Florentine Francesco Guicciardini wrote: "It was easier to know the name of liberty than to see the effects." He also noted what would prove to be his undoing: whatever party came to power in Siena was increasingly dependent on "the favor bestowed upon it by foreign potentates." In fact, already in 1520, the Siennese factions that sought to topple the Petrucci had proven willing to put the city at the mercy of foreign powers, when they sought the intervention of Charles V, the powerful emperor who simultaneously ruled both the Spanish empire and the Holy Roman Emperor for more than three decades.

In the aftermath of Siena's victory at Camollia in 1526, with the Siennese still fearing additional attacks from exiles and their foreign allies, the Siennese approved of Emperor Charles' decision to place a military garrison near the city. The Siennese intended for the 400 Spanish soldiers who maintained the garrison to help keep the peace and defend the city against outside attacks like the one they'd just faced. In the Spanish diplomatic correspondence of the age, Siena was depicted as a disorderly state, but one that was positively disposed to the Spanish, given that Spanish students had long been a regular presence in the city. Unfortunately, the long-term effect of the Spanish garrison was that the Siennese were placing themselves at the mercy of the Spanish.

Siena's problem, according to a Siennese ambassador who was meeting with the powerful Ferrante Gonzaga in 1530, was that regarding the nobility, "all who were born within these walls are equally noble." By 1540, leading Siennese humanists like Alessandro Piccolomini and Claudio Tolomei, among others, called out for reform, arguing that a unified government composed of the city's leading political factions was necessary to eradicate the lacerating divisions between the *monti*. The Nine used these calls for unity as a pretext to reenter the political area, and after securing the support of Emperor Charles, they again seized power in 1541. The following year, the Nine banned all public meetings, again resorting to suppressive tactics in

their efforts to control the city. They also blocked a much-needed tax census in 1544. The only new legislation that they passed in this decade was a series of citizen statutes. Among the most consequential reforms was the requirement that the Captain of Justice be a Siennese-appointed foreigner, a clear effort to resolve a conflict between Siennese factions about who should run the justice system through the appointment of a neutral third party, just as the city had long done in the communal age with the position of the *podestà*. However, this new requirement had the effect of only further concentrating power in the hands of Siena's elite, since the Spanish oversaw the appointment. Moreover, the same statutes fused the city's two traditional communal councils into a single legislative body with lifetime appointments, creating a real Siennese senate and a distinct ruling class of individuals known as *riseduti*. In effect, Siena's political class was in the process of advancing an aristocratic ideology that provided them with significant legal protection. For example, it was made increasingly difficult to try these *riseduti* for any offense or to mandate judicial torture for them. Despite, or perhaps because of, such gains by the ruling class, in February 1546, the Siennese managed to rise up and throw the Nine out of power. They also dismissed the Spanish garrison. An embassy headed by Siena's archbishop, Francesco Bandini, was quickly sent to the emperor for the purposes of damage control. Bandini pleaded with the emperor to help solve the problem of Siena's political instability and its citizenry's refusal to accept governance by a narrowly defined elite.

A series of new regulations dating to 1545 regarding the procession of the Corpus Domini are revealing about mid-sixteenth-century power dynamics in Siena. It is clear that one's civic identity (and one's power and influence in society) remained closely tied to one's profession or religious organization: the city's 43 artisan groups, 20 confraternities, and many religious orders all participated, along with groups from numerous professions, including knights, lawyers, medical doctors, and notaries. Festivals like the Corpus Domini were opportunities for citizens to move beyond their factional alliances and participate together in collective rituals and communal celebrations. The entire celebration of the Corpus Domini emphasized the sacrality of the event through pomp and grandeur. A commission was charged with ensuring that everything was respectably adorned, with ivy, laurels, and floral festoons. Participants reenacted religious scenes or sacred stories, and dressed up as important biblical and historical figures. While seemingly everyone participated in the festivities, important groups were excluded. The neighborhood military companies were not invited, indicative of their diminished status after Siena's political oligarchy had become entrenched. Siena's rural communities were not allowed to participate.

Even more tellingly, the city's *contrade* were not included in the Corpus Domini celebrations, despite the fact that all 17 of the modern *contrade* were already in existence and had all developed their own identity, territory, and rituals. Moreover, already by this time, the *contrade* participated in the Palios of those years. However, as the canvases of Vincenzo Rustici's paintings from the 1580s make clear, the events associated with it were significantly different from the modern Palio. Each *contrada* paraded with large wagons and floats, each one shaped like whichever animal each *contrada* had adopted. Rustici's paintings also reveal that the festival did not yet

involve a horse race, but instead consisted of a gory hunt, in the Spanish style, with bulls, deer, rabbits, and the like all grouped together, then freed and hunted.⁵ Whatever their importance to the Siennese themselves at this point in the city's history, their exclusion suggests that the governing elites did not recognize the *contrade* as political organizations.

Beyond these artistic depictions of the sixteenth-century Palio, another tantalizing glimpse that survives of the culture of Siena is a menu describing the dinner held on the eve of the Corpus Domini in which the city's elites were invited to the Palazzo Comunale for dinner. One finds meats like capon, roasts and boiled meats; pigeon, goat, partridge, hare, and pork brain; sauces made of spleen; numerous cheeses; an abundance of flavor enhancers like myrtle and *sapa* (unfermented wine); and fruits like oranges, lemons, fresh and dried grapes. For dessert there were the small Siennese sugar cookies called *biricuocoli*, marzipans, and *confetti*. There was also an abundance of local wines (Bibbiano and Malignano). Thus, even on the eve of the fall of the Siennese Republic, the elites were still thriving, while they intentionally suppressed other groups through whatever means available, such as the prohibition on knights and jurists from engaging in all commercial activities. In fact, the function of the government in these last years of the Republic seems to have been to repress one's political enemies while doing everything those in power could do to benefit their class.

Such a power imbalance in Siena helps explain the fact that despite the factionalism that was making Siena nearly ungovernable, the population found itself unable to unite. Such a situation proved tragic, as the fall of the Nine and the expulsion of the Spanish only ended up provoking a powerful imperial response. They immediately placed another garrison outside Siena, this time headed by an authoritarian military governor, Don Diego Hurtado of Mendoza. He immediately called for the Nine to be reinstated and proposed sweeping changes aimed at reconciling the city's competing factions. His solution, which dictated that all *riseduti* and their offspring were eligible for government office in Siena, angered Siena's nobility, who believed that the pool of candidates was far broader than it should be. Out of the urban population of approximately 7,500 men, based on the new reforms, 1,434 people were deemed eligible for office. For the Nine, such reforms threatened to undermine their status within society. One of their leaders, Carli Piccolomini, lamented that the best members of society, Siena's nobility in his view, were not running the government. Instead, Siena's Republic survived only through the promise of judicial and political equality. Piccolomini's contemporary, Girolamo Muzio, was also critical of the political landscape in mid-sixteenth-century Siena, asserting that "even the common people participate in the most honorable offices." As Muzio saw it, the Spanish, "in order to stabilize their tyranny, have armed and have given so much authority to the plebeian classes, that they will no longer be able to take it back." He insisted that out "of honor and in the service of God such an abominable tyranny must be extirpated from the heart of Italy."

In order to gain the upper hand, the Nove again petitioned powerful foreign leaders for assistance, this time turning to Emperor Charles and asking him in a letter signed by 200 members of the *monte*, to build a fortress in Siena so that

they could, with Charles' assistance, assert their will over the populace. Building began as expected under the supervision of Charles' Spanish troops. The construction of the Spanish fortress opened the eyes of many in Siena who had previously ignored the warning signs. It finally became clear that the Spanish forces intended to conquer Siena and subordinate the Sienese with the assistance of the Nove, who were willing to betray their city-state to remain in power. This perspective on the alliance between the Spanish and the Nove was recorded visually in a surviving Biccherna tablet from the time that functioned as pro-Sienese propaganda: in the image, the Spanish are depicted as aggressively attempting to become masters of the city with the help of those traitors, the members of the Nove. In the face of such a grave threat, the majority of the Sienese were finally able to move beyond their factional allegiances in defense of their Republic: in 1552, the Sienese successfully revolted against the Spanish and the political faction that represented the Nine. They destroyed the Spanish fortress and expelled the military governor. Yet the expulsion of the Spanish did not allow the Sienese to assert their independence. Instead, almost immediately after their successful rebellion, the Sienese once again felt compelled to find a powerful protector. Naturally, the Sienese turned to Spain's most powerful rival, the French.

This was the beginning of the end for the Sienese Republic, as Siena once again found itself at the center of a larger battle between the most powerful forces of the day. Word soon spread throughout the continent about the impending conflict since it marked a crucial moment in the conflict for hegemony between the French and the Habsburgs in Europe. Both parties coveted Siena's ample territory, including its ports upon the Tyrrhenian Sea, and viewed Siena as strategically important to their broader interests in the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. Meanwhile, Cosimo de Medici viewed Siena as central to his own ambitions to control all of Tuscany, leading him into an alliance with the Spanish. The Sienese placed the defense of their city in the hands of a French contingent under the control of Blaise de Monluc from Gascony. In his surviving *Memoires*, a classic work of French literature, he describes the Sienese as a timorous bunch, desperately in need of his aid.

In January of 1554, the Spanish began their long siege of Siena. Conditions deteriorated for the Sienese that summer at the battle of Scannagallo in the Chiana Valley. There, the Sienese entrusted their defense to the rich Florentine exile Piero Strozzi, who was made commander of their troops and who led the opposition to Medici rule in Florence. However, Cosimo achieved a decisive victory at Scannagallo, allowing him to firmly control Florence. Next, Cosimo and his imperial allies turned their full attention to besieging Siena. Siena's men and women dug in to defend their city, with up to 3,000 of the city's women under the supervision of noble women, defending the Porta Camollia.⁶ However, by the time winter came, conditions had turned dire for those left within the city walls. For a long time, the Sienese received provisions from the outside through the use of underground tunnels and clefts in the walls that the besiegers knew nothing about. However, as the surveillance became tighter and provisions scarcer, the Sienese



FIGURE 4.3 The Siene state at the end of fifteenth century. This map reflects the Siene state at its greatest territorial extent

decided that whoever could not contribute militarily had to leave the city. The elderly, women and youngsters, including 250 orphans from the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, were forced to leave, left to beg for mercy from the besiegers. For many, there was none.

But such a desperate move only prolonged the inevitable. On 17 April 1555 a Siene delegation signed a treaty with Cosimo, who used the treaty to prove to the emperor that he had successfully brought the conflict to a close. And indeed, the urban war was over, with the troops of Monluc departing the city on 21 April and meeting with the victors. The Siene had lost their city. Though a small delegation of Siene exiles would try to keep the flame of the Siene Republic alive for a few more years in exile from Montalcino, the great age of republican government in Siena had drawn to a close and the era of Medici rule was about to begin.

Notes

- 1 In those years, in fact, a miniature inside a codex shows the snake of the Visconti family, and it can today be seen on display in Siena's State Archives.
- 2 In Capalbio, the walls with the lion of the *Popolo* stand today as a reminder of Siena's victories there.
- 3 Petriolo's fame came from its thermal baths, which attracted the patronage of foreign dignitaries, knights, and even popes, as the baths of Petriolo were Pope Pius II's favorites. Siena also had baths at Talamone.
- 4 The Malavolti family had only recently resurfaced after their ignominious exile at the turn of the century. In 1473, at the Pecci Palace, Siennese nobles held an extraordinarily lavish private party in honor of Eleonora d'Aragona, the daughter of the king of Naples.
- 5 The first surviving evidence indicating that all 17 took part in the feast day celebrations in the Piazza del Campo for the Assumption dates to 1546. We also have written notes of the assemblies of the *contrade* of Onda that date to the time of the Republic.
- 6 Leading to a small fort next to the gate being named the fort "of the women."

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PART II

From the age of the Medici
to the present day



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5

THE AGE OF THE MEDICI (1557–1737)

An intelligent compromise

Though the modern era would be bloodier still, the sixteenth century was the most violent century Europe had ever seen in its history. New technologies, including ever stronger cannons and the widespread use of gunpowder, made warfare more destructive and made it possible for kings and princes of the day to stake their claims to greater territory. As we saw in the previous chapter, Siena throughout the first half of the sixteenth century was the victim of early modern political and military forces much larger than itself. With hindsight, it seems inevitable Florence, in the form of the Medici grand dukes, would come to dominate all of Tuscany. But political autonomy had been part of Siena's ruling ideology since its origins, and thus, even after the loss of the city of Siena in 1555, Siennese elites held out hope that affairs would change in their favor and that the Siennese could reassert their independence. After all, at the end of the fourteenth century, Siena had briefly fallen under the Visconti, only to regain its independence when fortune intervened, in that case, with the death of the Milanese duke, Gian Galeazzo Visconti.

Siena's best hope in keeping the Republic alive was to maintain a satellite government in Siennese territory that had not been conquered. Strategically well positioned and protected by its imposing garrison, Montalcino offered Siennese elites their best shot at saving the Republic. In fact, the inhabitants there had been Siennese citizens since the fifteenth century and were bound to the Siennese through trade and special concessions that the Siennese had granted them to transport their products without paying dues. Thus, following the loss of the capital city, Siena's ruling class, together with the city's soldiers, fled to Montalcino and set up a government called the "Republic of Siena in exile in Montalcino." Given that the Siennese had already surrendered their city and proven to be no military match for the enemy, it's clear that those holed up in Montalcino were awaiting international

help, specifically from the king of France. More than 1,000 Sieneſe citizens left Siena for Montalcino, composed of 242 nobles and 435 of the popular class along with their reſpective families and ſervants. The moral leader of the group was Mario Bandini, Siena’s laſt Captain of the People and an indomitable combatant for freedom ſince the 1520s.

Given the technological developments of the fifteenth and ſixteenth centuries, even a well-fortified garrison like at Montalcino was no longer impregnable. And, of course, whatever loyalty they felt for Siena, the Montalcineſi were horrified to watch their city taken over by the Sieneſe only to then be ſubject to extremely deſtructive bombardments. Though the exiles held out until 1559, help from the French never came. Inſtead, Sieneſe independence formally ended with the peace accords of Cateau-Cambreſis, which officially brought an end to the Sieneſe Republic and the complete ſurrender of Sieneſe territory.

Of course, political matters within Siena hadn’t waited for the formal ſurrender of Sieneſe exiles in Montalcino. Immediately following the capture of the city in 1555, Siena had been paſſed around between the great powers of the age, with Florence and the Spaniſh each controlling it for a time through appointees. The Carafa and Farnese families alſo ſhowed intereſt in controlling Siena. Ultimately, Coſimo was able to retake control of the ſituation thanks to the reſignation of Emperor Charles V, and Coſimo’s cloſe reſhipſhip with Charles’ ſucceſſor, Philip II. Moreover, Coſimo promiſed Philip ſtronger guarantees of loyalty and better care for Siena and its territories than the other ſuitors, as Coſimo knew that if the ſtate of Siena were to ſlip away, he might eaſily loſe his hold on Florence and all of Tuscany.

The certificate of 3 July 1557 gave Coſimo the Sieneſe ſtate as a fief, and he promiſed to govern in a “faithful, noble, and honorable” way. The Sieneſe ſtate, now under the ſtewardſhip of Coſimo, loſt acceſs to its ports, which the Spaniſh wiſhed to retain for deſenſive purpoſes and for the convenience it gave them in ſailing to Naples. Moreover, Philip let go of the administrative burdens of the Sieneſe territory, and he liberated himſelf from its debts. He alſo gained the legal loyalty of Coſimo, who committed himſelf – through a ſecret pact – to acquieſce to any marriage propoſal put forward of the Spaniſh crown, deſpite the fact that ſuch an arrangement was contrary to canon law. While the pact placed Siena under Coſimo, it left open the poſſibility that the Spaniſh could recuperate the fief under certain conditions. Finally, although the agreement did not mention Siena’s inſtitutions by name, Coſimo promiſed not to eliminate them.

Coſimo’s political acumen and uſe of clemency to ſtrengthen his ſupport and his moral authority garnered him much reſpect among the Sieneſe. Shortly after Montalcino had fallen, Coſimo ſolemnly made his way to Siena, protected by militias and accompanied by his wife, Eleanor of Toledo. The Biccherna cover for 1560, the year of their ceremonial entry into the city, depicts Coſimo and Eleanor’s entrance by way of the Porta Camollia. Notably, the cover depicts the entrance in gray colors, and there are no applauding throngs to welcome the winning party. In other words, the loſs of political independence had grave and permanent conſequenceſ that had to be acknowledged, even if the Sieneſe were forced to accept Medici rule.

There's clear evidence that some Siennese sought to resist Cosimo's charm offensive. For instance, Cosimo had requested that the city's *contrade* organize a hunt in the Piazza del Campo, but it had to be canceled because of staunch opposition by the neighborhood associations.

Still, if any contemporaneous politician had the skills to unite Siena by gaining the support of the populace and of the elite, it was Cosimo. Winning over the people required more than just promising to respect and protect the Siennese. The ceremonies and revelry and pageantry all aimed to help Cosimo overcome resistance to Medici and Florentine rule in Siena by presenting Cosimo as an ideal ruler: benevolent, regal, and generous to the conquered. His initial visit as grand duke involved all the pageantry, pomp, and circumstance one would expect from the Medici at the height of the Renaissance. There were ball games and horse races, as well as processions and feasts with bread and wine for all. The Academy of the Intronati put on a play in the communal assembly hall, which had been converted into a theater. The festivities concluded with one of the innovations of the age, fireworks, shooting out from the Torre del Mangia and the windows of the communal palazzo.

Beyond appeasing the populace with such festivities, Cosimo's first visit to Siena focused on gaining the support and loyalty of many influential Siennese elites. Whatever Cosimo's methods, he had no trouble finding noble supporters. In his influential *History of Siena*, published less than 15 years after Cosimo's initial visit to Siena, the Siennese noble Orlando Malavolti presented Cosimo as the father of the Siennese homeland (i.e., Siena's *pater patriae*). Here, Malavolti has inverted Cosimo's role in Siena's history: rather than being the one who ended the Siennese Republic, Cosimo is depicted as its savior. It was an audacious and fallacious claim, but it was effective, as this idea soon gained acceptance among the city's nobility. For instance, Siennese novelist Pietro Fortini referred to the Medici fortress not as an imposing structure from which Florence subjugated Siena but instead as the "bridle on the city." With influential allies like Malavolti, Fortini, and many others, Cosimo had the support he needed to govern Siena without resistance. Like Augustus in Rome following an era of civic war, Cosimo's appeal was rooted in his promise to end Siena's internal strife and in doing so, to help the city recover and prosper economically.

Cosimo was savvy and knew the importance of making sure his government would be viewed as legitimate. He understood the importance of symbols and rituals, history and appeals to tradition: he formally took control of Siena through a ceremony of feudal investiture that gave him unalienable legal rights with which to reform Siena's institutions. He also tried to acquire the consent of the governed through displays of moderation and respect toward the conquered, even granting a general pardon for crimes committed within the Siennese state before the start of Cosimo's lordship in Siena.

Of course, we must be clear that not all was well in Siena. In fact, Siena was in terrible shape by the end of the 1550s, with the city's walls and many buildings heavily damaged and the population having been reduced to around 10,000

citizens. Siena's expansive territory was also suffering, devastated by many years of war and the subsequent economic and material destruction of the Spanish and Florentine attacks, as well as internal conflicts among rivals within the governing classes. Thus, Siena's acceptance of Cosimo's government came from a weariness shared by many Sienese who desired stability and opportunity more than political independence.

The excellent prince and loving father, as he called himself, introduced a "form of government" that assigned "dignity, honor, and usefulness" to the most meritorious and guaranteed an "impartial" administration to all. He promised that in Siena, justice would be "good and equal." After decades of decline, warfare, and loss, such promises were well received by the Sienese, who welcomed an end to the factionalism that had defined Sienese politics for more than a half century. In fact, the situation for Sienese elites was better than for their Florentine counterparts: Cosimo had such complete power in Florence that he had become a grand duke capable of humiliating other nobles who were supposed to legally have been his *pares* (equals). In Siena he was only a feudal lord.

Only three months after his initial visit, Cosimo provided the Sienese with a revised constitution. As one would expect, Cosimo left a Florentine in charge of Siena, in the figure of the "lieutenant and governor" to whom he transferred the general "guard and custody" of the state. In most matters Cosimo left well enough alone. Siena kept its traditional offices related to the administration of the territory as well as financial and civil justice. The city also kept its General Council, though it was renamed the Grand Council (*Consiglio grande*). In matters of justice, affairs remained largely unchanged, though one positive reform required that judges provide a motive for the crime when sentencing someone accused of a crime, a change meant to ensure that the Sienese trusted their justice system, and that judges weren't pushing false or trumped-up charges against the innocent. The offices of the Balìa, which had developed organically during the Republican era, were formalized and codified in law. Officials of the Balìa were given "the authority to elect, send ambassadors to confer titles at our behest, appoint commissioners for the State, [and] decree the city's ordinary spending with the money from the treasurers (*camerlinghi*) and depositories." Nonetheless, the governor held significant authority to approve every deliberation and expense, and Cosimo was responsible for nominating members to the Balìa. Thus, even though Siena's institutions largely survived the fall of the Republic, Cosimo managed to gain complete control over the Sienese state. His appointment of the governor and his selection of officials to the powerful Balìa were the chief means through which he ensured that Siena's political elite remained loyal to him and his policies.

Under the Medici, the Grand Council became the citizenry's most important representative body. Though he eliminated the senate in name, its members maintained their political influence in the new political order: Cosimo nominated those who had served in the senate and were over 35 years old to lifetime positions on the Grand Council. Cosimo also lifted restrictions that had kept families from having more than two family members on the city's chief council at a time, a

system through which Cosimo could build close alliances with certain families by doling out political offices and honors. The body of councilor-senators fluctuated between 140 and 150 members during the age of the Medici, making it significantly smaller than the General Council had been under the Republic. New men were appointed to the Council upon the deaths of its members, with Cosimo selecting new councilors based on the reports his functionaries in Siena had created to keep the grand duke informed. Siennese elites proved all too ready to demonstrate their loyalty to the Medici in order to receive their reward, a lifetime post on the Great Council.

Under the Medici, Council meetings were once again held in the hall of Simone Martini's *Maestà*. Generally, the Medici-appointed governor oversaw Council meetings, though in his absence the Captain of the People was permitted to serve as acting president. One way in which the Medici circumscribed the power and efficacy of the Council was by restricting topics of debate. This was accomplished through a new requirement that the Council could only debate matters that had first been approved by the governor. As a rule, the governor would only propose deliberations that had already been approved in the Consistory or in the Balia, stripping the Council of its traditional role as the deliberative body of Siennese government. The Council elected officials to serve on Siena's most important body, the Concistoro, as well as the other chief offices of the state. During the Medici era, one obtained the label of *riseduti* only after first serving a term on the Concistoro. Cosimo sought to undermine traditional loyalties to one's political party (*monte*) by instead creating a new united political elite, named *gentiluomini* (gentlemen, or even better, aristocrats), that was loyal to the Medici. According to the customs of the city, two friars from Monte Oliveto were appointed to maintain the integrity of the Council's elections. This last point serves as an ideal example of how the Medici grand dukes operated: they maintained the pretense of respecting traditions and existing institutions, while simultaneously removing the means by which the Siennese could protest Medici rule. In effect, the Council was filled with men who had already demonstrated their loyalty to the duke and had been rewarded with the label *riseduti* and lifetime appointments in the Grand Council. They then carried out the delicate task of electing new people to the Consistory, who, after serving their two-month term, would become a lifetime member of the Council, with their name recorded alongside those of all members of the Consistory in the beautiful *Libri dei leoni* (Books of the Lions).

So who precisely comprised the ruling class in the age of the Medici? As we have seen, in 1545, contrary to the Republican tradition, Siennese elites had begun using the label of *riseduti* to create a distinct class of families whose members had served at the highest level of Siennese government, on the Concistoro. While the creation of the label *riseduti* had marked a shift in class dynamics in Siena, in the age of the Republic, Siennese elites never managed to create a closed-off official roster of "noble" families, as there was for centuries in Venice. In fact, over the first half of the sixteenth century, the competing factions of Siennese elites fought among themselves exactly on this issue. They'd even railed against efforts by the broader

citizenry in the last years of the Republic to enlarge and broaden the composition of the nobility.

Prudently, therefore, instead of settling the matter of defining the nobility, Cosimo introduced a new procedure through which individuals could be initiated into the ruling class. His solution was that the grand duke could select individuals based on their merit, “civility,” and “ability” to benefit the state. In effect, this allowed Cosimo the freedom to review and essentially interview (or interrogate) anyone deemed capable and willing to join the elite to ensure their loyalty. At the same time, the institution of the *Balia*, which had always been Siena’s solution to tricky government stalemates, was tasked with assessing the merits of those people claiming status as *riseduti*. The *Balia* tried itself to codify requirements for *riseduti* in 1604, only to have their proposal rejected by the Council. It seems that many elites believed it was safer to leave a margin of useful discretion to the Siennese ruling class and to the Medici themselves rather than to close the ranks entirely. In an age where class and rank directly related to the prospects and opportunities available to citizens, such flexibility may have benefited the ruling class, yet leaving matters at the discretion of the *Balia* surely left many families in a state of uncertainty, clinging to the hopes of having a son appointed to the Consistory without having any way to guarantee such an appointment.

The new, broad Siennese nobility

Part of the challenge in defining its nobility came from the fact that many of Siena’s most outstanding and successful families were not part of the traditional nobility; instead, they had belonged to political parties that had been officially “popular” (that is, of the *popolo*) during the era of the Republic. This included, for instance, the Borghesi family, who were part of the sixteenth-century iteration of the government of the Nine and who gave the world the energetic pope Paul V. The great Chigi family also came from a popular *monte* (the Reformers), even if that didn’t prevent them from placing one of their sons on the papal throne in the person of Alexander VII (pope from 1555 to 1567). Strangely enough, even certain branches of the Piccolomini family were also part of the popular *monte* of the *popolo* during the Republican age, as such an alliance served as their only way to gain a place in the Consistory.

It is not by chance that Siena’s contemporaneous historians say more about the authoritarianism of the Medici regime than the changes to the ruling class: after all, the transformation of the nobility occurred only slowly, even if the effect of such changes did indeed have enormous political and cultural implications for Siena. Given that Cosimo’s reforms dramatically affected the composition of the ruling class, it is worth our time to look at the formal steps through which the Medici transformed Siena’s nobility. Cosimo established the Order of Santo Stefano in 1561 for the purpose of creating an official designation of nobility in Tuscany. In particular, Cosimo wanted to weed out legitimate nobles from those whose claims lacked official recognition by a figure of widely recognized authority, such as the emperor. In Siena, naturally, eligibility was restricted to those whose families had

served in the Consistory in the previous centuries. Thus figures whose families had been part of the “popular” *monti* and had served on the Concistoro, including the Pecci, Bellanti, Vieri, and Luti families, were officially entered into the ranks of the Tuscan nobility of that Order in the early 1560s. Claims regarding one’s nobility and family history were examined by a notary and a Captain of Justice, who was Siena’s most important judge during the Medici era. Despite the creation of this formal process of admission, the question of who could use the term formally and who could dress as a member of the nobility remained unresolved in Siena until 1597. In that year, a non-Sienese judge (chosen for his impartiality) restricted noble status even further, deciding that only sons of the *riseduti* who served in the Concistoro could claim noble status.

In this way the future of those seeking to join the ruling class came to rest upon appointment to the Concistoro. By the turn of the seventeenth century, the rank of nobility formally included some *riseduti* from the three popular *monti* of the *Popolo*, the Reformers, and the Nine. Every two months, the Grand Council nominated 32 names for the Concistoro, eight from each *monte*. All the votes were then tallied and the eight individuals with the most votes overall became the next “priors and governors” of the city, the same title given to the city’s leaders since the thirteenth century. The problem with this approach to defining the nobility was that it failed to create a sustainable nobility: every time a *riseduti* died without producing a male heir, the size of the nobility would shrink. As a result of such policies, the number of *riseduti* dropped from 901 in 1577 to only 700 by 1640. Another statistic from the age is equally revealing: during the time of Cosimo there were 281 noble families, yet by 1717, that number had dropped to a mere 191. In an effort to prevent families without male heirs from losing noble status, many of the families that were extinguished on the masculine side transferred their name and patrimony to another family through marriage. The best example of such a strategy was Bichi Borghesi Ruspoli Forteguerra, within whom four families entrusted their collective future. In 1674, Forteguerra obtained the label of *riseduto* at 85 years old, though he was too sick and frail to even report to the palace for government duty. Instead, it is clear that achieving recognition as a *riseduto* allowed for his descendants (through marriage) to likewise obtain such a designation.

Despite the decline in the number of *riseduti*, the traditional Sienese nobility fought mightily to keep new families from joining the ranks. Paradoxically, those newly admitted to the ranks of nobility sought to enlarge the number of nobles expressly to diminish the solidarity of the old guard. Only in 1680 did the two sides reach an agreement on how to ensure the survival of the nobility: the electoral system of the Consistory was altered so that with each death of one of the *riseduti*, the Consistory was authorized to choose one citizen to join the ranks of the *riseduti* from a box full of the names of qualified applicants. From this moment onward, Siena had in fact a defined oligarchy. Ultimately, the loss of the Republic ultimately had little effect on the power of Sienese elites. In fact, while Sienese elites weren’t particularly wealthy as compared to their peers in Florence, Siena’s nobles became more adept at holding onto their power. It is not without significance that

the Siennese nobility occupied the government's traditional offices at Palazzo dei Signori in the civic center of the city in the Piazza del Campo, while the headquarters of their Florentine overlords were located close to the cathedral in a newly constructed palace built by the grand duke and located in the Piazza del Duomo.

Beside a changing nobility: Monte dei Paschi and the surroundings

Medici rule brought noteworthy socioeconomic changes for the Siennese. Among Siena's most pressing challenges was to repair the damage done by the prolonged carpet bombardments that the city had faced before the Republic's surrender, especially in the northern and eastern districts of Camollia, Bruco, and Ovile. While the ruling class largely survived the collapse of the Republic, numerous noble families were compelled to abandon the city. Some left because of the political situation; other times they left because of better economic opportunities elsewhere, as was the case with the de Franceschi family who founded a successful publishing house in Venice. Some families even left for religious reasons, such as the Cignoni family, who settled in the region of Elba. Many others accepted offers to become magistrates or teachers outside of Siena, including in Macerata and the Kingdom of Naples, as well as at the courts of the great Medici figures of the time.

On the whole, Medici rule does not seem to have hindered trade or limited the number of travelers who visited Siena. However, by the second half of the sixteenth century, the surviving evidence suggests that increasingly people visited Siena not on pilgrimage but instead as part of one's Grand Tour of Italy. Written accounts of those who visited Renaissance Siena emphasize the city's historical importance and beauty, and elites from all over Europe came to Siena to admire its artistic masterpieces and architectural monuments. Siena was not just a stop on a trip to Rome but was also viewed as a place for prolonged stays as well. Surviving records praise Siena for the purity of its language, the civility of its people, and the quality of its foods and wines. As one might expect, the presence of so many foreigners in Siena was not always welcomed: in one source, one person complained that the excessive English and Dutch presence warranted a move out to the countryside, specifically San Casciano, so that they could continue to carry on conversations in Italian!

Despite the loss of Siennese independence and the city's loss of political importance, talented and well-connected Siennese men were still able to achieve prominence and acclaim across Europe. Giulio Mancini was the personal doctor to Pope Urban VIII, as well as the author of *Considerations on Painting* (1620), which offers firsthand accounts of Caravaggio and Carracci. The forward-thinking Siennese engineer Teofilo Gallacini is remembered even today for his writings on sea ports, while Celso Cittadini was a renowned Renaissance historian and antiquarian. Siennese elites also continued to serve in important military, professional, and ecclesiastical positions, such as Francesco Piccolomini's appointment as head of the Jesuits.

Elite families sought to maintain their financial clout through strategic investments, primarily rooted in controlling the land and the agricultural sector. The rural area, after decades of devastation by invasion and war, experienced a recovery by the end of the sixteenth century. As demographics improved, it became easier for small farms to find labor and thus, to survive. It was in this period, in fact, that sharecropping subdivision of lands created the Siennese landscape that is so loved and admired today: the farmhouses made of red bricks, perfectly situated on small, carefully maintained hills, adorned with rows of cypress trees. Siena's elites also constructed many villas on their large properties during this time, often by restructuring ancient fortifications. These properties, many of which remain in use today, often became the centers of rich wine-producing companies in the Chianti, Brunello, and Nobile di Montepulciano regions.

There are an almost embarrassing number of examples: the "castello di Casole," which is now a luxurious hotel in the area of Querceto; the villa Piccolomini Clementini of Arceno in the Chianti region, which gave haven to Siennese paintings from the Pinacoteca Nazionale during World War II; l'Aiola, a residence and farm once owned by the politician Giovanni Malagodi, which was the seat of meetings between Siena's political elite in the 1500s; the villa of Geggiano, located close to Siena on the way to Chianti, which has been used as the location for a few films, like *Io ballo da sola*; and last but not least, the villa of *Piana in Val d'Arbia*, which was once a hospital before passing to the De Vecchi family, then to the Della Rovere family, and finally to Sereno Freato, collaborator of the honorable Aldo Moro. The countryside has many other beautiful and rich residences, which reflect the pre-occupations and values of a social elite that is, at least in part, still in existence.¹

At the end of the 1600s, a noble from the Segardi family claimed that "one cannot number the palaces that the Siennese have in their villas, since they [have] found more pleasure building in the countryside rather than in the city." There were many reasons for this: more space, certainly, as well as fresh air at a time during which Siena continued to suffer from the occasional (but still devastating) reoccurrence of plague. Rural villas were also better places to have parties, which were increasingly more frequent among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century elites, though such revelry stretches with great continuity back centuries and then forward all the way to us today.

Returning to the second half of the sixteenth century, reduced spending on military matters and fewer impositions on the Siennese citizenry bolstered the city's recovery. For Siennese elites, Medici rule brought certain economic benefits. For instance, the Medici imposed less direct financial pressure and fewer forced loans on Siena's elites, which helped reconcile Siena's ruling class with the conquering Florentines. In addition, the Medici's inauguration of the new Monte Pio in 1569 also helped revitalize the patrimonies of Siena's elites as well as the city's institutions. Located on the Rocca Salimbeni (now the headquarters of the Monte dei Paschi), this new bank was established according to similar rules as its Florentine counterpart, paying a 5 percent annual interest rate on deposits, and charging a low interest rate to those who wished to borrow from the bank. In doing so, the institution

helped accelerate the end of Jewish control of the loan business and their privileged position in the financial sector. The consequences for the Jewish community were severe: they were increasingly marginalized and ghettoized in urban centers across Italy, including in Siena. At the Monte Pio, fear of mismanagement or fraud at the bank led civic authorities, the private banking family of the De Vecchi, and functionaries of the duke to intervene in the affairs of the bank. The papacy itself sent visitors to check up on their accounts, as well as those accounts belonging to other ecclesiastical entities, including Santa Maria della Scala and the cathedral. When the Florentine Monte caught word of the investigation in Siena, they sought to divest as best they could, investing instead in the rearing of swine livestock and the cultivation of cereals in the Maremma region.

Beyond concerns over mismanagement, the Monte Pio continued to fend off the criticisms of Catholic theologians who remained diffident regarding the Catholic Church's age-old prohibition on usury. As a consequence, even small interest rates had to fly under the radar if they could not be presented in public documents in some declassified manner. As a result, authorities in Siena aimed to transform the Monte into a public bank, free from the restrictions of the Church. In 1623, just as the Sienese had finally reached an agreement on the organization of the future Monte, a very serious scandal broke out when it was discovered that a full 20 percent of the Monte's capital had been misappropriated. Numerous people were found to have played a role in the theft, including the Monte's treasurer (the



FIGURE 5.1 The façade of Siena's cathedral and the Palazzo del Governatore. To the right of the cathedral sits the Medici palace, built for their governors at the end of the sixteenth century

camerlengo), as well as some knights of Santo Stefano and a theologian from San Martino. It quickly became evident that the Monte had been lacking sufficient oversight for many years. The subsequent trial ended only after 14 months and involved the use of systematic torture in the Marcolina, located in the Palazzo Pubblico. A number of individuals deemed responsible for committing fraud were sentenced to death, while others endured lengthy prison terms or exile, along with large fines. This landmark trial and these exemplary condemnations aimed to bring to an end an era of fraud and mismanagement, ushering in a new one of competent and honest banking.

Following the completion of this trial, the new Monte finally opened its doors in January 1625, taking the name Monte dei Paschi. The name actually comes from the fact that in order to instill public confidence in the bank, the grand duke guaranteed all deposits up to 200,000 ducats, the annual amount of revenue received by the customs office of the *paschi* (pastures) of the Maremma region. While the grand dukes would never have to dip into the reserves, this general pledge had the intended effect of encouraging investors to trust the bank with their money. The bank's transformation into a public company reinvigorated the institution. The bank succeeded in large part because of the conservative terms under which it would provide loans: anyone requesting a loan was required to make a deposit, often of deeds to land or benefices, that the bank would receive if the borrower defaulted.² However, the bank's generous rate of return, 5 percent annually, made the bank an attractive option for anyone with the means to secure a loan. In fact, many rural communities asked the Siennese state to allow for their citizens to acquire a communal loan by pledging their collective goods. This was so appealing that by the turn of the nineteenth century, most Tuscan communities had likewise associated themselves and were thus able to borrow from the Monte dei Paschi.

The Monte in its new form became a kind of fief of the noble citizenry, under the firm control of Florentine officers. With the exception of a full-time commissioner, all of the institution's officials were Siennese elites who came from the *riseduti* and were nominated by the Balìa to serve three-year terms.³ The Monte provided private citizens, particularly the city's elite, with the necessary capital to fund major events and projects. For instance, many families turned to the Monte to borrow money for their daughter's dowries. The *contrade* worked through the bank to get the capital it needed for entrepreneurial activities, repairs, or construction work. The Placidi and Petrucci families used the Monte to secure the resources necessary to drain the marshes and settle the *padule d'Orgia* (Sovicille). Similarly, the Monte also funded the work undertaken to enlarge a building that Celso Tolomei had donated for the foundation of a boarding school for young nobles. The Jesuits controlled the prestigious boarding school, which from 1683 onward had as its center the magnificent Palazzo Piccolomini. The grand duke also donated another splendid residence to the school in rural Santa Colomba, built based on the designs of Baldassare Peruzzi. The boarding school became famous and had 100 students hailing from the big Italian cities that were searching for an excellent education, culturally (from the classics to theater) and physically (from horseback riding to



FIGURE 5.2 Inscription for the Socini. In the late nineteenth century, Siena's anticlerical administration put up this plaque in memory of the famous sixteenth-century Sienese heretics of the Socini family

fencing), which the school offered. For the young people of royal descent and traveling from Rome, it was normal to ask for hospitality at the school and a tour of the city, leading to Siena increasingly being cited in travel books and by travelers from across Europe heading to Rome. But while Siena still remained a destination and had impressive institutions, we do get some sense of the general decline of Sienese infrastructure from these visitors, particularly in their complaints about the poorly maintained roads.

Undoubtedly, these were difficult times in Siena. The traditional wool, linen, and leather businesses that had been functioning in the city for centuries were starting to close up shop. The lack of employment opportunities led to a decline in public order and urban population. The city struggled to control groups of vagabonds while the population fell from approximately 20,000 in 1600 to only 16,338 in 1738.

With limited economic opportunities for Sienese families, many women were shipped off to convents, while others sought whatever work they could find. In the second part of the seventeenth century, Curzio Sergardi recorded that there were 1,245 nuns enclosed in 21 convents who had to be subtracted from the lists of procreators.⁴ Many other Sienese women found work as wet nurses at the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, where they were paid to rear orphans. However, when officials there examined why the number of orphans had gone up some 300 percent in only a couple decades in the middle of the seventeenth century,

they discovered something startling: many of the children under the care of the wet nurses were actually legitimate children whom the nurses were rearing as a means of earning additional money. Clearly, these were desperate times for many Sieneese men and women. To prevent such practices, the hospital started branding foundlings with the stamp of the hospital on their little feet.

As the eighteenth century approached, Siena's economy remained stagnant, with nobles increasingly resorting to taking up public or semi-public positions that were ecclesiastical in nature just in order to survive; others subsisted on what came to them from the farmers whom they hired to manage their broadening sharecropping ventures, which itself was a result of the numerous mergers by noble families that were slowly dying out. Even Siena's institutions found themselves in need of assistance, such as the college of the Sapienza, which turned to the Monte for assistance, claiming that its peasants (*mezzaioli*) did not have enough food to survive.

An astute anonymous non-Sieneese observer left us with a record of what contemporaries thought about the bank at that time. He writes,

There are those who fancy that the Monte is the ruin of the city, since it is making men lazy in making money through merchant practices or other means, because they expect to find easy money there. Others find it to be profitable, because it has removed the infinite hiccups and dry exchanges, which reached to 15%, particularly with the Jews.

Our anonymous author concludes that the Sieneese are "better in their nobility than with money," alluding to the large number of Sieneese nobles and their limited collective wealth. Still, he presents a positive view of Siena's nobility, claiming, "They are less inclined to material things, and very dedicated to literary things, of an elevated spirit and very astute intelligence." He asserts that the nobility is well educated, claiming they are "covered in rhetoric, philosophy, law and, at times, theology." We are also told that Siena's cultural institutions, including the Rozzi, the Intronati, and the association of the Casino dei Nobili maintained a reputation for "public dispute and an ability and enthusiasm for exams." At the same time, he makes it clear that by the seventeenth century, Siena could no longer boast at having luminaries in the public arena of contemporary European political and cultural circles.

A report dating to the middle of the seventeenth century that was prepared for Siena's governor, Prince Mattias de Medici, brother of the grand duke, concisely sums up the financial pressures of the age and the many challenges Siena faced: we're told that the wealthiest of families struggled to afford the exorbitant costs associated with noble marriage. In fact, owing to dowry inflation, most families pushed their daughters into overcrowded monasteries. So bad was the situation that women without sufficient dowries weren't even allowed to become nuns but were instead forced to live in the convents as servants. With each person pushed into the religious life by financial and social necessity, the city coffers suffered owing

to the diminution of citizens and revenue, given that ecclesiastical earnings were exempt from taxation.⁵

The city was in a state of decline. Like those in the Middle Ages who could only marvel at the ruins created by Romans hundreds of years before, so too were the Sieneese forced to reconcile their decaying city with its former splendor. Seventeenth-century Sieneese politician Lorenzo Rocchi, a *riseduto* who served multiple terms in the Consistory, lamented the “ugliness” of the city and blasted the city’s crumbling infrastructure and urban core. He noted the many demolished homes throughout the city, the “rotten streets,” and the decrepit *bottini* underground that couldn’t hold water and thus imperiled the city’s water supply. Above all, he lamented the deplorable state of the Piazza del Campo, which, he claimed, was “entirely rotten.”

Even those construction projects that Siena *did* undertake in this age are revealing about Siena’s decline and its dependency on its past. Civic leaders hired the architect Carlo Fontana to redo the interior of the Palazzo Pubblico, eliminating a courtyard and raising the two wings of the Palazzo that were adjacent to the Communal Council hall. Around the same time, the Intronati funded the restructuring of the beautiful theater in the back wing of the Palazzo. In addition, the large eight-ton bell (the *Sunto*) in Siena’s communal tower, was replaced at great cost in 1666. What is most notable about these construction projects is the fact that the Sieneese decided to enhance the medieval beauty of the city rather than attempting to build Siena anew in the style of the age. In other words, the medieval city that one encounters when visiting Siena today is in fact the result of a centuries-long (and still ongoing) series of renovations, expansions, and restorations, all aimed at preserving Siena’s past. Even when they built new structures entirely, such as the archbishop’s palace, they often dictated the reuse of medieval materials and required that new buildings be constructed in the neo-Gothic style. Built thanks to the support of the Sieneese pope Alexander VII (pope from 1655–1667), this new palace was constructed to the left of the Duomo in a neo-Gothic style. It is clear the Sieneese realized by the seventeenth century, if not before, that their greatest treasure would always be their past: the city’s history, its monuments, its art, its neighborhoods, and its great medieval architecture.

Siena’s increased reverence for its past was also a matter of circumstance, coinciding as it did with the city’s economic decline and increasing irrelevance internationally in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶ With dwindling sources of revenue, the Sieneese managed to weasel out a tax of roughly 2 percent of ecclesiastical earnings beginning in 1703. Even the bank endured a serious crisis between 1708 and 1711, only narrowly avoiding bankruptcy. In 1728, the university found itself so impoverished that it couldn’t afford to pay the professors of the Studio. Shortly thereafter, the Monte Pio found itself in crisis, as it faced a shortfall of over 20,000 scudi. Two nobles from the Petrucci and Rustici families were blamed for mismanaging the bank’s resources. While the Grand Duke pardoned the Petrucci family member because he was a knight of Santo Stefano, his colleague from the



FIGURE 5.3 The Palazzo Pubblico today. Still serving as the city hall in Siena, the Palazzo Pubblico has remained largely unaltered since the end of the seventeenth century, when the wings on the right and left were built one level higher than their original medieval design

Rustici family was decapitated. Only three years later, the same two families were found guilty of additional acts of theft, this time at the Monte dei Paschi.

Owing to the lack of opportunity in Siena at the turn of the eighteenth century, the city's richest, most talented, or most well connected often fled to Rome. One, Flaminio Del Taja, became a cardinal and was a judge at the Sacra Rota during the time of Pope Alexander VII. Another Siennese elite, Ludovico Sergardi (aka Quinto Settano) moved to Rome and became a member of the Arcadia, publishing several important polemical and satirical works, including *Satyrae* and *La conversazione delle dame di Roma*. Among those who made their mark without leaving Siena, Girolamo Gigli stands out. He was an extraordinarily prolific author who became famous for his satirical comedies and ferocious polemics defending the Siennese language, as well as his *Vita* of Saint Catherine. Yet despite all Gigli's success, he became notorious in Siena for suggesting to the grand duke a new way of taxing grain and wine. His recommendation quadrupled the duke's earnings while earning Gigli the hatred of his fellow Siennese.⁷

For those who remained in Siena, cultural expression took the form of pageantry, certainly as we will see, in the development of the Palio, which gave large visibility to the involved nobles, but also with the association of the Rozzi. This association gained an increasingly prominent role within the city, earning the right to call themselves "academic" in 1690. Around that time, they invested in a large structure near the Campo where they built a delightful theater that is still functioning. They became famous also for their public appearances especially during the season of Carnevale, when the Accademia would organize masked appearances in the

Campo. Naturally the subject matter varied depending on the prevailing tastes of the day. Of the many plays put on at the Rozzi, the delight, the satire, the jubilation, and even the fundamental secularism and classicism reflected Siennese values and its public culture.

The *contrade* and the Palio in early modern Siena

With its proud closure of Siena's ruling class that began upon the ascension of the grand dukes, Siena's elite had managed to gain only a Pyrrhic victory: by closing off the ranks of the nobility so completely, the noble class was beginning to thin itself out through endogamy, while simultaneously isolating itself from the general populace, breeding resentment from a poor and often desperate citizenry. The times were changing. And even among Siena's nobility, from the seventeenth century onward, there were very few Siennese families who were truly rich and powerful. A great many more members of the noble class were counted among the poor.

In fact, some nobles at least argued that government offices should be open to the lower class. For instance, the *riseduto* Alcibiade Lucarini proposed reforming the Balìa by opening up half of the seats within the council to non-elite representatives of the city proper and its territory. Though nothing came of the proposal, it illustrates that there were some elites who were reflecting on the inequality in Siena and recognized that too many were struggling and that there simply weren't enough opportunities for enough people. And while Siena always possessed numerous successful entrepreneurs, capable directors of the city's confraternities, as well as talented leaders among the Rozzi and in the *contrade*, Siena's constitution excluded all of them from holding public office, provided that they did not qualify unless they qualified as *riseduti*.

Beyond just their exclusion from government, one can think on the psychological consequences that these small cases of discrimination created on a daily basis. In 1700, a group of scholars who worked at the Studio (university) were not allowed to use the Campo for their public ball games (*pallonata*), as the Campo "could only be used by the nobility." The same was true for Carnevale, when only the noble Siennese youth were allowed to take part in the Vigil games (*giochi delle Vèglie*), including soccer and *pugna*, which were "always celebrated in the large square." And while the Palio took place in the Campo and involved the *contrade* and was a prerequisite for the festival, the *contrade* lacked the resources or authority to hold a lavish Palio without the support and approval of the nobility.

The *contrade*, as we saw, came into being near the end of the age of the Republic, though initially, these organizations were primarily concerned with games and shows. It was only with the loss of Siennese independence that the *contrade* gained a voice in civic governance and where collective participation became a civic norm. They also began to operate as associations where matters of local concern could be discussed, such as the water supply, prostitution, noise, pollution, violence, and animal control, to name just a few. Certainly, Siena's civic conscience was strengthened by the long and hard events pertaining to the siege, when matters of politics became for many a

matter of life and death. In such a context, the Sieneſe united behind a ſhared ſet of values, and a ſhared wearineſs for thoſe who would ſeek to fundamentally change the city and divide its people. Such a perſpective was alſo certainly rooted in the hopes that Siena’s proud history of Republican participation could ſerve as a model for the future againſt the oligarchic turn that the city had taken, of which the ſumptuary laws and the laſt Republican ſtatutes were the regulatory expreſſions.

The *contrade* came to ſerve as the living expreſſion of the Sieneſe people: only they had the credibility and ſkill to organize ſuch feſtivals in Siena. It waſn’t juſt a problem of coſt but alſo of technique, of paſſion, of ability and manpower. Therefore the commune choſe to hear from the *contrade* before Coſimo’s arrival, in 1560, and then on many other occasions that followed, including for the arrival of a prince or a pope, and alwayſ for the feſtivals given during the viſits of the grand dukes and their ſons. On the occaſion of 1560, the *contrada* of Onda was forbidden from diſplaying the traditional ſhe-wolf ſymbol, which had ſerved as the ſymbol of Siena in the age of the Republic, and waſ thus ſeen as potentially anti-Florentine and thus a ſymbol of reſiſtance in the face of Medici rule. As a reſult, the *contrada* adopted the dolphin as their ſymbol, which remains Onda’s ſymbol to this day.

But the *contrade* were not yet the nerve of the Palio of the Aſſumption, the official religious feſtival of the city. And even when the *contrade* did put on feſtivals, they could be bull hunts, or bull runs, or an *asinata*, a diſplay of donkeys adorned with the ſymbols and colors of the various *contrade*. Today, people take pleaſure in reſpecting tradition, yet when we examine the Renaissance feſtivals put on in Siena, we are ſtruck by their novelty, their innovation, and the abſence of any ſort of regular program.

The *contrade* continued, nevertheless, to form their own councils and hold meetings with each neighborhood’s prior, treasurer, and accountant (*bilanciére*) in which all matters of concern for the neighborhood diſtrict could be addreſſed, beſides city politics, which waſ forbidden. In theſe meetings, members of the *contrade* might complain about the preſence of prostitutes or lowlives in the neighborhood and aſk for their *contrada* leaders to bring the concern to the Balia. If a ſacred image waſ deteriorating in the local *contrada* church, the *contrada* might aſk for donations to repair it; iſſues with the water ſupply might be addreſſed; in ſome caſes, *contrade* might aſk the city for aſſiſtance in conſtructing new churches, as the *contrada* of Liofante (now called Torre) did after the victory of Camollia on 1526.

In time, *contradaioli* donated or left bequeſts to their *contrada*, which allowed the *contrade* to become important ſocial iſtitutions, capable of alleviating ſome of the ſuffering within the city walls. The *contrade* might aſſign dowries to poor young girls, or they might help pay the rent for a needy neighborhood family. *Contrade* began to inveſt whatever capital they had in ſhares at the Monte, where they could expect to receive a good return on their money. The *contrade* were being built ſtep by ſtep, ſomewhere between games and local neceſſities, thanks in part to a ſolidarity created through the difficulties of everyday life, among people

that by and large were of the same social class who could speak with one another without feeling embarrassed, without deference regarding social standing. *Contrade* also came to play a crucial role in legal battles, as *contrade* often acted in a corporate manner, as guilds had in the city centuries before, with members leveraging their collective power to pursue shared prerogatives. *Contrada* leaders were known to the commune in this era and were closely supervised. For the Medici it was a prudent necessity, as illustrated by their use of paid secret informants within the *contrade*. If there were a need to organize something, one would know how to find the leaders of the *contrade*.

During the years of the Republic, Siena had reduced the number of popular associations so that the churches or the confraternities of the neighborhoods sustained the *contrade*. The *contrada* of Onda, for example, had already edified its own chapel in the Church of San Salvatore by the end of the sixteenth century. There, they observed their religious functions with their own trusted cleric whom the *contrada* elected. Still to this day, each *contrada* maintains an elected clergy member known as the *correttore*.

Just as the functionaries of the Medici kept them under close watch, so too did the civic officers of the city. In the same way, the nobles could not afford to ignore them if they hoped to avoid the social tensions that the *contrade* could foment.⁸ Every playful rally that the various *contrade* put on had its own story in this period, whether for promotion or organization. As would be expected, everything had to be approved and overseen by the commune through the agencies of the Balìa and the Biccherna, both of which were run by the old and new nobility, since every game and festival involved the life of the city. The nobles were also involved directly in the event as “deputies” of the festivals and “officials” of the hunting events.⁹ With or without an identifiable headquarters within the *contrada*, these groups organized local festivals, like bullfights, exhibitions of donkeys, horse races, and hunting events in the Campo throughout the year.

The celebration for the Palio of the Assumption on 15 August remained firmly within the control of the commune and, as the medieval tradition became more consolidated over time, the horse race stretched across much of the city, often beginning at the Porta Romana and finishing at the Duomo. Generally speaking, everyone could enter a horse, from princes and foreign marquises, to the city’s leading citizens. In fact, the *contrada* of Oca entered a horse in 1592, making it the first time a *contrada* had done so.

The *contrade* were encouraged to cultivate privileged relationships with particularly prominent noble families, with the hope that they would represent them in dealings with authorities, and contribute toward expenses or donate the prizes for the winners of games at the festivals. In the 1400s, the *contrada* of Drago came into existence owing to the patronage and protection of a single powerful family. In a similar fashion, the *contrada* of Onda depended heavily for a time upon the patronage of the Chigi family. These nobles called themselves “protectors” of their *contrada*, even though in some cases, the nobles didn’t even live within the territory of the *contrada* they were supposedly protecting. Having noble protectors was

useful, though, as they could intervene and mediate with the communal or Medici authorities.

The modern-day Palio, that is, the horse race *alle tonda*, or “in the round” of the Piazza del Campo, is the result of various experimentations. In May 1605, to celebrate the election of a new Siennese to the papal throne, Paul V of the Borghesi family, the Siennese held a Palio with buffalo who had to complete three laps around the Piazza del Campo. After the May race, there were repeated requests, ultimately unsuccessful, for the August race to again be held *alla tonda* in the Piazza, but this time with horses. The idea for the Palio to take place in the Campo had been introduced, but it would take another few decades for it to become customary. It happened at the Festival of the Assumption in 1633, when for the first time, the *contrade* raced on horseback against each other and only against each other, with the *contrada* of Tartuca winning. As fate would have it, plague had prevented outsiders from participating, thus making possible Siena’s first-ever Palio race exclusively between the city’s *contrade* in honor of the Feast of the Assumption. The Siennese returned to this idea of holding a Palio between the *contrade* in the Campo again in July 1641 and May 1643, when Prince Mattias de Medici, who was governor of the city at the time, promoted the event. Two *contrade* who would become (and still remain) fierce enemies, Torre and Onda, respectively, won these two Palios.

Festivals and culture from Prince Mattias to Violante of Bavaria

We must resign ourselves to the fact that despite these three horse races between the *contrade* that took place within the Campo during the first half of the seventeenth century, the Palio as we know it had still not become a regular part of Siennese civic life. For instance, in May 1655, as part of eight days of festivals held in honor of the election of Siennese pope Pope Alexander VII, the Siennese held a Palio, though the race was not held in the Campo but went through the city streets (*alla lunga*). The victor of that race was none other than Siena’s governor, Prince Mattias, the brother of Grand Duke Ferdinand and an erudite and an ambitious military man. A proud patron of the arts, Mattias swiftly organized a court around him, located in the Saloncino theater, attached to his own residence in a palace near the cathedral. Mattias gave a renewed visibility to the city as a cultural center, and he was very much appreciated for this reason. The Siennese nobility, who had bemoaned Siena’s decline under the grand dukes, was enthusiastic about Mattias’ role in elevating Siena’s profile. In fact, in 1650, Siennese elites sent a special embassy to the grand duke in Florence in order to ensure the prince’s permanence in Siena, since it had been rumored that he would be leaving. Whether or not their request was influential, Prince Mattias ended up remaining in Siena until his death in 1667. Written accounts from the time make clear that the Siennese genuinely mourned his death. In the Duomo a superb and noble catafalque was erected for him.¹⁰

It was during the years of Mattias that the Palio of the *contrade* truly morphed into the event we recognize today. In 1656, Siennese deputies decided to put an end to the traditional fireworks in the square of the beautiful early

seventeenth-century Baroque church called Santa Maria in Provenzano.¹¹ In place of the fireworks, the deputies promoted a Palio between the *contrade* around the Campo (*alla tonda*) for 2 July, with the benediction of a large drapery in the Church of Provenzano, and the enthusiastic participation of the *contrade*. Funding came from three wealthy nobles of the neighborhood district who paid for the July Palio's organization and expenses, including the prize money. The custom became that, following the race, the presiding lords would select their successors in a great public and well-attended ceremony, replete with lots of drumming and trumpeting, provided by the commune. Such an arrangement highlights the intersection between public and private, of religious and lay, of noble and popular; in effect, it highlights the true character of Siena and the Sienese throughout the city's history.¹²

The Palio of the Assumption has always been the principle festival of the city. The race itself, it should be noted, was only one piece of a two-week festival that the Sienese put on each August.

Curzio Sergardi, writing in 1679, provides us with firsthand overview of the festivities and the race held for the Feast of the Assumption. He writes that the festival was a "noble fair of products and other merchandise, which lasted for 15 days" and included the presence of merchants, nobles, and many others from all over Europe. Of the race, he notes that the prize was a "very rich Palio [cloth banner], brocaded in gold," and that the "best beasts of the princes and lords of Italy" raced on horseback. The race Sergardi describes is, however, very different from the one today. He notes that the

race begins near the Porta Romana and ends at the Palace of the most Serene Grand Duke in the square of the Duomo. With the occasion of this festival, one can see daily a noble cavalcade of gentlemen that includes both citizens and foreigners, who, during the day, come to Siena in order to learn the science and behaviors that pertain to chivalry.

Sergardi does, however, confirm that the July Palio was regularly held in the Piazza, writing "there is another Palio, which is run for the Visitation to the Virgin Mary in the grand square by the *contrade* [...] and which, beginning and ending in the same square, gives a great amount of gracious spectacle to the onlookers with costumes, machines, inventions and liveries." In contrast to his description of the August Palio, he makes no mention of the *drappellone* the winner received for the July race. What is clear is that the annual Palios and people's relationship with their *contrade* were continuing to grow increasingly intertwined, with both serving as important markers and expressions of identity, solidarity, and patriotism.¹³ The July Palio occurred with the bust of the Madonna of Provenzano high up on the large drapery, overlooking the emblems of the grand duke, the governor, and the deputies of the festival. Today, these emblems have been replaced with those of the Balzana, the mayor, the Lion of the People, *Libertas*, and the ten *contrade* who were participating in the race.

As we consider the evolution of the *contrada* from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, it is important to remember that back in the sixteenth century, several *contrade* existed only as fairly informal neighborhood councils, or functioned much like modern neighborhood watch associations. Perhaps owing to the increased importance of the Palio in civic life, or simply because they offered citizens a connection with their neighbors, the *contrade* came to play a more central role in Sienese life. As a consequence, it became necessary to transform the *contrade* into formal organizations able to enact neighborhood rules, negotiate with other neighborhoods, petition lay and ecclesiastical authorities, and find noble “protectors” willing and able to help each *contrada* fund the events of the Palio. Some *contrade* that had participated in some of the festivals in the sixteenth century disappeared definitively as the *contrada* system was formalized, including the *contrade* of Spadaforte, Gallo, Vipera, Leone, Orso, and Quercia.

One important innovation of the age, the Palio di ricorsa, first occurred in 1689. In that year, the winning *contrada* of 2 July decided to call upon their affiliates to hold a race the day after the Assumption, on 16 August, and offered 40 talleri to the winner. This event, which gave the organizing *contrada* visibility, established a precedent, and by 1701, Siena was regularly holding two Palios each year – besides the Assumption’s traditional one on 15 August. Of course, the winner of the July Palio was not obligated to hold an August Palio, but for reasons of prestige, honor, and public relations, they almost always did. While the Palios were organized by and for the *contrade*, the commune continued to hold authority over the event in a number of ways: they designated the times and rules of the event; made a proclamation before each *carriera*, as the race was called, delineating the order of the various *contrade*; oversaw the selection of the horses, which were often of wildly different competitive abilities; and finally, they arranged the place where the *contrade* would meet to begin the great procession to the Campo for the race.

Government intervention into the Palio was at times both necessary and the source of tension. For instance, in 1713 the authorities of the grand duke deemed it necessary to resolve the discord between the neighborhoods of Tartuca and Onda, owing to a contested result in the August Palio, with the authorities deciding to split the prize money offered up by the *contrada* of Chiocciola, which had sponsored and organized the August race, between the two winning *contrade*. As a compromise, the *drappellone* was consigned to a church positioned at the border of their districts. The decision seems to have left no one happy, as the *contrade* were angered that the matter wasn’t left to them to resolve. Yet taken all together, we can say that by the start of the eighteenth century, the Palio as we know it was part of public life in Siena: the race was consistently three laps around the square, with the winner being the first horse to pass before the platform upon which the nobles sat who oversaw the race.¹⁴

To commemorate the arrival of their new governess, the grand princess Violante Beatrice of Bavaria (widow of Ferdinand de Medici), in 1717, the Sienese held a grand Palio for which rich documentation survives that allows us a glimpse into the

organization of the event. Organized and overseen by the Balìa and the Casin dei Nobil, all leading men of each *contrada* were invited to appear in person, dressed as nobles, with no fewer than 60 people in tow. Of the 16 *contrade* that were invited,¹⁵ only Leocorno did not attend, as they could not muster the requisite men. Yet only ten of the *contrade* were chosen by lot to race; those who were excluded presented themselves with wagons that recalled classic or naturalistic subject matter. The excluded ones, however, were able to take part in another race that was held just two days later, as the date of the Palio of Provenzano had been moved to highlight the extraordinary nature of the Palio held in honor of Violante.

The extraction by lot of the ten *contrade* underscored a problem: the excessive crowding of horses at the *canapé* at the beginning of the race, which always caused difficulties and even injuries to the jockeys and horses. Thus, in 1721, the Balìa instituted a new rule that has remained in effect ever since: for each Palio, ten *contrade* would be chosen by lot, with the seven other *contrade* that were *not* chosen being automatically allowed to participate in the successive Palio. Other rules were also instituted in these years that have remained in effect: it was decided that two trial runs would be held each day in the run-up to the race; the platforms could be arranged only on the side where the small shops were situated; and the jockeys would participate on parade horses (*soprallasso* horses). The rules also stated that the jockey could use a whip but not a strap, and that helping a jockey back up onto the saddle was prohibited. Today, the rule that required jockeys to be compensated at ten lira per race and ten scudi per victory are, unfortunately for the often cash-strapped *contrade*, no longer in effect.

These regulations illustrate the relationship between the *contrade* and the civic administration in the early eighteenth century. In some instances, the city turned to the *contrade* for help, as it did in 1721, when authorities proposed using the *contrade* to guard the gates of the city during a time when plague threatened the city. In other instances, the *contrade* asked the authorities to return the favor, as in 1727, when priors from eight *contrade* forwarded a protest to the state finance office, the Biccherna, regarding the conditions of public fountains, which were “worn out and dried up.” Shortly thereafter, in 1730, the Balìa defined the boundaries of the *contrade* in an effort to ensure that every *contrada* had a sufficient population from which it could collect fees to pay for the Palio and other *contrada* projects and events. That proclamation on *contrada* borders remains intact today, with interpretations of dubious passages still some times contested.¹⁶

The Palio involved all the principle civic components of Siena, from commoners to the nobility, from the commune to the Church. It had become a cultural expression of Siennese pride, patriotism, and identity: despite the end of the Republic and the difficulties Siena experienced in the centuries that followed, the *contrade* and the events of the Palio allowed the Siennese to maintain their competitive and participatory passion and to belong to something bigger and more important than themselves.

The twilight of the Medici age

By the start of the eighteenth century, the Medici dynasty was in serious decline, though Sienese elites still received many of the trappings that came with political power even at the end of the Medici age. Those elected served a two-month term as a Signori on the Consistory, selected from among the pool of *riseduti*. They resided in the Palazzo Pubblico and were entertained by a chorus of 12 musicians and chapel maestro plus an eight-piece horn section. Meanwhile, 30 damsels with liveries, half blue and half green, looked after their every material need. A first-hand account from the age describes how every two months to mark the official beginning of the new Signori's term,

the Signori of the past and present bimestrial period listen to the mass and hold a meeting to discuss the new regime. After this, the scepter and the rings and the Signori of the past government are brought to the Duomo and to the Spedale for thanksgiving. And then, having descended to the loggia of the Mercanzia, they dismiss the nobility that comes serving them and they take off the clothing of the Consistory.

To mark the occasion, the Spedale and one of the city's social assistance organizations (the Compagnia della morte) were tasked with providing bread to every prisoner in the city. Beyond those elected to the Signori, the following were also public officials elected every two months:

a *riseduto* doctor or an academic from the *Intronati*, the *Scottiere* for the provisioning of the table, the two Signori that would sponsor and help educate the young novitiate nobles that would make up the future council, and a Camerlingo who was charged with attending to the sacred furnishings of the chapel and the Palazzo, a duty that was always assigned to the youngest noble.

The entire election ceremony was so important to the ruling class in part because it was understood to be unchanging, deemed necessary by virtue of tradition, and lacking completely any functionary of the grand duke.

Paradoxically, out of all the governments the Sienese would have after the fall of the Republic, the government of the Medici was the softest and the most respectful of the past. The downside of the Medici approach was that, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the ruling class had largely become inflexible, unable, or unwilling to reform laws or improve the quality of life for the general population. While the Balia were responsible for the daily governance of the city, the Signori came to play a largely ceremonial role through their presence at scores of public events: they attended masses, led processions, reaffirmed annual rites at churches, attended civic ceremonies, and attended ceremonial meetings with the city's confraternities or the hospitals. Under the Medici, this was the function the Signori served: they symbolized both the vivacity of and continuity with Siena's Republican

past and its institutions, and, conversely, the circumscribed power they maintained under the Medici. In sum, they legitimated the Medici's rule and authority in Siena while simultaneously being dependent on the Medici and needing to remain their good graces. The era of the Medici had allowed for the fusion of a handful of Siena's oldest noble families with many other newer noble families into a new elite, imposed by the Medici through careful and incremental institutional changes. The model of civic life during the Republican age had dissolved in favor of another, as the *contrade* became the central source of pride, loyalty, and celebration for the Sieneese. The *contrade* offered the Sieneese a sense of agency in a world they no longer controlled. In effect, the *contrade* were one large collective resistance against their loss of autonomy, the only possible form of resistance in a new world.

Notes

- 1 There are also important newcomers like the builder Salini who has put together a private art gallery in his restored castle of Gallico, rich in Sieneese pieces. He exhibited his collection at his own expense in the Palazzo Pubblico in 2017.
- 2 Only in 1866 were these requirements done away with.
- 3 The institutional leadership consisted of a chancellor, a custodian (*tavolaccino*), a server (*servitore*), and two revisers (*revisori*).
- 4 Interestingly, Sergardi did not make the same point concerning religious men.
- 5 And there were always many needs, like when the thirteenth-century church of San Francesco burned down in 1655. It was quickly rebuilt, though the medieval artwork that had adorned the earlier church was either lost or gravely damaged in the fire.
- 6 The Academy of the Fisiocritici deserves mention as an important cultural institution and precursor to the Enlightenment in turn-of-the-eighteenth-century Siena. Its leader, Pirro Maria Gabbrielli, prayed to the spirits that were "authentically scientific," earning the ire of the Curia. Eventually, the Academy made an agreement with the university for the implementation of lessons at the Sapienza, under the protection of Cardinal Francesco Maria. The agreement remains in effect today. The Academy, located beside the convent of Sant'Agostino, has a museum of natural and medical sciences, and continues to publish a prestigious periodical.
- 7 Another erudite noble, Uberto Benvoglienti, described Gigli, on a ten-point scale, as "an 8 in intelligence, 5 in science, 2 in prudence."
- 8 But just as the games fluctuated, the *contrade* were still without any stable institutional identity. This is attested to, for example, in a large and detailed published *engravage* (from the end of the sixteenth century), which includes a bird's-eye view images of the city: while the parishes and confraternities for every third of the city are included, the *contrade* are not.
- 9 They were the representatives of the "most traditional noble families of the city" – as stated in an analytical list from 1581 – they were the *Capocaccia* (Leader of the Hunt), and the *Capocorni* (lit. Head Horn or Honcho) of the festival, which was in this case the *contrada* of Aquila.
- 10 A few years after his arrival, in 1657, a small group of nobles created a club for themselves, where they could meet and hold festivals as well as exchange ideas and discuss proposals to submit to the Medici authorities. Called the "Little House of the Nobles" (*Casin dei Nobili*), it replaced the *Mercanzia* in the Gothic palace that faced the Palazzo Pubblico in the Piazza del Campo in 1739 and was active from that time on.

- 11 The church became a symbol of the new government of the Medici, as it was erected with their help in the area that once belonged to the Salvani family. Given that the most famous member of the Salvani family was Provenzano of Montaperti fame, the church started to call itself, “of Provenzano.”
- 12 And it remained such until 1836, when one of the three signori refused to pay his third of the cost, leading the commune to take a more direct role in organizing the event.
- 13 Around 1680, during the time that the nobility was encasing itself and closing off its social position, the painter Giuseppe Nicola Nasini was commissioned to fresco a *Gloria della Madonna* in the vaults of the Antiporto of Camollia at the most northern end of the city. The Antiporto is the first historic monument one sees in Siena if arriving to the city by bus from Florence. Though weather has not been kind to the frescoes, in Nasini’s work that depicts the various institutions in Siena, the *contrade* are included, donning their colors or animal emblems, evidence that by that time, the *contrade* were an unequivocal part of the city.
- 14 As long as a horse is still wearing the *spennacchiera*, that is, the colors of the *contrada* on his head, he may win the Palio even without a jockey.
- 15 The only one of Siena’s 17 *contrade* that was missing at the time was Aquila. Giovanni Antonio Pecci would reconstitute it the following year, becoming the official “Protector.” In its very first race, on 2 July 1719, Aquila was victorious; the winning *drappellone* (cloth) from that race can still be seen in their *contrada* museum, the oldest surviving Palio prize of its kind.
- 16 Though the population of *contradioli* outside the walls has grown larger than the population living within the city walls, only the latter were considered at the time of the initial proclamation: there are now only around 10,000 residents living within the city walls.

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6

FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE WORLD WARS (1723–1945)

Hard times? The reforms of the Lorena family

We discussed the Medici era at such length because of its crucial role in not only shaping the modern city but also in shaping how the Sieneese would come to understand their history, their collective identity, and their sense of exceptionalism. The Medici era definitively reinforced the character of Siena's civilization, paradoxically spurring resistance in the face of foreign domination and cooperation in defense of tradition. In this chapter, we can proceed in a more rapid fashion, indicating in broad strokes the principle paths through which Siena safeguarded its identity. By the time of the Lorena dynasty, the name given by the Sieneese for the period of Habsburg-Lorraine rule beginning in 1737, much of what we admire about Siena today was already in place: the physical city was preserved in its traditional configuration, though work continued for centuries on churches, civic buildings, and urban palaces; and the Palio the city's unique culture of *contrade* helped foster notions of belonging, the common good, and Sieneese exceptionalism, as did the foundation legend of Montaperti, with its emphasis on Siena's privileged relationship with the Virgin Mary.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the duchy was in bad shape. Cosimo III's 53-year reign as grand duke (from 1670 to 1723) coincided with the economic decline of Tuscany and the loss of Medici influence across Europe. His son, Gian Gastone, would prove to be even worse, leading to the collapse of the Medici dynasty upon his death in 1737. In the words of eighteenth-century Sieneese historian Giovanni Antonio Pecci, Grand Duke Gian was utterly incompetent and "completely given over to the pleasures of the senses [...] like a pig he died." Though the end of the Medici dynasty was welcomed, even the powerful Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty that succeeded them as grand dukes of Tuscany could not easily fix the many challenges the region faced. This was especially true given that ruling Tuscany seems to have been an afterthought during the first few decades of the Lorena era.

The first Lorena ruler was Francesco, who had been forced to cede his control over the duchy of Lorraine to satisfy the terms of a marriage agreement. Unfortunately for a deteriorating Tuscany, Francesco was largely absent from Tuscany during his 20-year reign, instead focusing his attention on the dynasty's more pressing international challenges from the Turks in the Balkans. While he left trusted associates in charge, they faced resistance from old functionaries who continued to hold the same offices they had under the Florentines and who feared breaking the century-old equilibrium they'd grown accustomed to. The nobility in Siena continued to cling to their privileges and landed wealth as long as they could, and they did so in a way that is revealing about Tuscany's economic stagnation during the first half of the eighteenth century. For example, the Casino dei Nobili took over Siena's old business center, the Mercanzia. This relocation encapsulates Siena's economic and cultural shift from the entrepreneurial institution of the Mercanzia to an economy largely based on land rentals, controlled by the nobility.

Throughout history, it is a truism that rentier classes, like the one found in eighteenth-century Siena, often ossify in societies that lack sufficient economic opportunity and growth: an elite retrenches into safe and typically unproductive sources of revenue while using their status and political influence to thwart the passing of any necessary reforms that might harm them personally; their protectionism in defense of the status quo then further contributes to the society's decline. Siena's vast nobility acted in precisely this way, making every effort to maintain their role within Siennese society and their control over land and public life by blocking every legislative initiative they deemed harmful to their interest, all while keeping the productive classes on the margins. Many large noble families resorted to marriages with foreign families and external ties beyond the city to survive, like the Ugurgieri, the Saracini, the Sergardi, the Chigi, and the Piccolomini.

Nobles also maintained their hold on Siennese society through their ongoing control of a near countless number of ecclesiastical and pious entities, often plundering the coffers in order to fund their own lifestyle. The hospital for the poor of San Lorenzo, for example, according to a secretive document from the time, received 1,700 scudi from its holdings, all of which was supposed to be spent on the poor. Instead, the rector had pocketed most of that for his own use, leaving only 300 scudi for the poor. Beyond such abuse, there was also neglect and decay. For instance, the territory of the Maremma region, which had once been a populous and fertile granary, was, by the eighteenth century, a desolate land, infested with malaria and overrun by brigands, who took advantage of the relative lawlessness of the region.

The astute Siennese intellectual Sallustio Bandini (1677–1760) tried to address the problem of the Maremma in his *Discorso economico sopra la Maremma di Siena* (1737). One of the leading economists of the eighteenth century, Bandini made the then novel case for free trade regarding grain. Bandini was, in effect, against protectionism, though he was not immune from mercantilist-type preoccupations that called for strong public intervention in the economy. Descended from a branch of

the Piccolomini on his mother's side, Bandini donated more than 3,000 works to the Sapienza, which would form the first substantial nucleus of Siena's present-day communal library, the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati. For his contributions to Siena, in the late nineteenth century the Siennese commissioned the statue of Bandini that still dominates the square of the Monte dei Paschi today.

It was only in the second half of the eighteenth century that the Lorena grand dukes began to attend closely to their Tuscan realm, working to modernize the duchy through legislative reforms at every level. In particular, they made reforming the many small urban governments scattered throughout Tuscany a top priority, as numerous towns had for centuries used ineffective, expensive, arcane, and complicated institutions to maintain a level of independence from the duchy. Other significant Lorena reforms unified the nobility by setting limits on the patrimonial devolution of family trusts (*fedecomessi*), and by standardizing tax procurements, weights, and measures. Even the calendar was finally standardized, as many communities had for centuries continued to start the year on 25 March.

The most successful grand duke during this age was Pietro Leopoldo, a contemporary and supporter of Bandini, who led the duchy from 1765 to 1790. Leopoldo published the first edition of Bandini's economic masterpiece in 1775 and implemented some drastic measures for the territory, separating the Maremma region from Siena, giving it a special set of administrators (1766), and dividing the state into upper and lower provinces. Over the protests of Siena's nobles, Leopold finally enacted a series of reclamations and *allivellazioni*, which incentivized property ownership in order to give a healthy shock to the Maremma region and encourage entrepreneurs and industrious types to repopulate the area.

Perhaps the most effective reform Leopold enacted was the sale of public goods, made possible by the shuttering of numerous civic hospitals and pious institutions. Such sales created a new class of "citizen" landholders, who were wealthy but not members of the nobility. Leopoldo also took aim at the priestly class and their purported ignorance on theological matters, arguing instead for a state church in Tuscany, taking the idea from the contemporaneous French theological movement known as Jansenism. Certainly by the eighteenth century, the numbers of women who had been placed in the city's convents had declined significantly from its high in the Renaissance: from records dating to 1772, we learn that there were only around 850 nuns in Siena. He also encouraged, through his policies and views, the diffusion of a certain secularism, which was skeptical of religious authority and emphasized the importance of science and expertise.

Meanwhile in the countryside Leopoldo enacted a series of farsighted and long-lasting reforms. In 1777, he reorganized the communities in Siennese territory, merging neighboring territories and therefore giving a definitive territorial configuration to local entities. Towns that shared borders were administratively unified and given a set of uniform statutes, with the hope that centralization would decrease administrative costs and help curb hostilities between neighboring communities. Such reforms did not come without protest, as is the case in all societies when the status quo is upended and political independence is threatened. In fact,

most towns and communities were affected by the reforms, including Montalcino, which incorporated the towns that lay near it. Only in those small cities that had already been able to absorb the territory around them, like the towns along the Amiata where small property ownership continued, did life continue unaltered. The reforms had the effect of profoundly reshuffling the ruling class, which as we have seen, had remained tightly knit up to that point despite the rapid spread of sharecropping. Leopoldo's reforms ushered in a new group of landholders who would make up a new base of communal participants.

For the first time in centuries, elites were held accountable in significant ways. Tax assessments and censuses were applied with a Habsburgian rigor, to which even property-holding priests needed to adjust. Just as importantly, individuals holding leadership positions or titles at a local government office were not allowed to receive the benefits of their positions without actually doing the work required. Likewise, the reforms forced many nobles to finally preoccupy themselves with the state of the property they owned and to take greater care of their residences.

Scholars generally agree that Leopoldo's reforms were good for Tuscany, especially his reforms regarding the selection of governing dignitaries. He appointed highly trained experts to key positions throughout the duchy, privileging merit and talent over nobility. In Siena, he also took on the vast administrative apparatus of the artisan guilds and the city's confraternities, dissolving them in 1781 and 1785, respectively. He even abolished capital punishment in 1786. One unintended consequence of these reforms for the Siennese was that the *contrade* gained significant agency in civic life, as they were given the freedom to construct their own churches and to suppress certain parish churches, such as San Salvatore.

The co-management of the Monte dei Paschi and the modern commune (1787): among nobles and the *contrade*

In Siena, Leopoldo introduced a new law that significantly broadened the rules of eligibility for public office: anyone who owned property valued at the modest sum of 600 scudi or more, was deemed eligible. The Balìa, which continued to oversee the election process, then entered names of eligible candidates into two separate extraction bags: one for nobles and the other for everyone else. Into this second extraction bag, the Balìa put the names of some 400 individuals, as well as the names of representatives of the proprietors of various other entities, including the *contrade* of Chiocciola, Onda, Oca, and Torre. The Balìa would then draw names by lot equally from the two bags, giving non-nobles a level of political access and opportunity that they hadn't enjoyed since the days of the Republic. Leopoldo also lowered the threshold for serving on the Communal Council, as it was decided that individuals or entities would need only 50 scudi to be eligible. At this income level, many additional citizens were included in the roles, as well as the *contrade* of Nicchio and Tartuca. Given the criterion for properties, someone who was both foreign born and a property owner in Siena was eligible to serve as a Siennese administrator. Jews too

were admitted to the communal council, along with select members of the clergy, including some Knights of Malta. In order to hold elected officials accountable, those elected were fined for missing meetings, and if their absence impeded certain key decisions from being made, they could be found personally responsible for the damages that the commune or some private interest may have suffered as a result.

While the magistrate was chosen by lot, this was not the case for those public positions that required particular expertise. For instance, only those with the proper financial training could hold the position of Camerlengo, while the commissioner of streets and factories had to be well versed in the city's statutes and the technicalities of various laws, permits, and licenses. Through these reforms, the nobility was downsized, though not destroyed. The Concistoro remained the preserve of the nobility, even maintaining significant judiciary authority on special and delicate civic matters, including in cases involving the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, and the Order of Santo Stefano, as well as in matters that related directly to their own interests, such as disputes about family trusts (*fedecommissi*). Moreover, with extraordinary disregard for the other social classes, leadership positions at the Monte dei Paschi and Monte Pio were reserved exclusively for the nobility.

At the beginning of the Lorena era, the Monte declared profits of only 1,500 scudi per year, even though it managed accounts worth about 250,000 scudi and involved approximately 1,800 debtors.¹ This was largely the result of the bank's sense of civic obligation to Siena: the bank was responsible for helping fund public work projects such as the upkeep of roads and the reclamation of the Pian del Lago. The banks also provided funding for the city's many pious institutions, annual stipends to the university, and regularly bailed out that institution from which the Monte Paschi had sprung: the Monte Pio.² However, the bank also suffered from embezzlement, given that many of the bank's biggest debtors were actually the bank's administrators, as well as their families and fellow Siennese nobles, who often had no plan to ever fully pay back their debts. While the communal magistrates closely watched over the Monte dei Paschi, they proved unable or unwilling to check the corruption. As a result of such mismanagement, Leopoldo began to appoint the bank's highest officer, the commissioner, himself. The Monte was also required to provide the grand duke with a dispatch of its balance sheets, which strongly suggests that during Leopoldo's term as grand duke the bank was, in effect, co-managed.³

In late eighteenth-century Siena, despite the reforms under Leopoldo, the city's population of approximately 17,000 inhabitants continued to face tough economic conditions, with thousands of Siennese impoverished and in desperate need of assistance. The same arguments that still dominate conversations about homelessness today were put forward in the streets and meeting halls of early modern Siena. At the Palazzo, for instance, politicians argued that many of Siena's poor were actually vagabonds who sought to exploit the mercy of the Siennese. Such assertions about the poor sought to limit the empathy one might feel for the poor while failing to offer a solution to the larger problem of limited economic opportunities and a shrinking welfare state. After all, even though a quarter of the city's population needed assistance, including 2,500 beggars and an additional 2,000 poor individuals

of noble origins, many of the city's smaller hospitals had been shut down, putting increased pressure on the great hospital of Santa Maria della Scala and on the Monte Pio. And while many Sieneſe were employed in manufacturing, working the city's 2,600 looms, wages were ſcarcely enough to provide for a family. Guyot de Merville, who viſited Siena in the middle of the eighteenth century, wrote that many Sieneſe families were ſtruggling and that “in moſt caſes,” female laborers “alone [kept] their families afloat.” All of this ſuggests that a lack of ſufficient employment options together with the diminution of the ſocial ſafety net left many in Siena deſperate and impoveriſhed and the city without the reſources to addreſs the problem.

According to Pietro Leopoldo, the Sieneſe were a docile people, even if they were given over to women and wine, and too often found in the city's taverns. That Siena was rich in “dives, pubs, halls and ſtreets full of lowly characters” was a fact recorded by the grand duchy's board of functionaries. The duke's men were probably offeinded by the lack of reſpect the Sieneſe ſhowed them, ſince the Sieneſe had been accuſtomed to illuſtrious ſorts of governors in the age of the Medici. The highly conſervative board of functionaries uſed its critique of Sieneſe licentiousneſs to argue againſt the need to addreſs the city's ſocial welfare needs, inſiſting that if the greatly lamented poverty were truly preſent, the city would not have been able to hoſt ſo many occasions for vice. One incident in particular reveals the fundamental diſconnect between the Sieneſe people and the functionaries. In 1766, 16 *contrada* captains ſent a letter to the grand duke, againſt an official who ſerved as the ſuperintendent in charge of overſeeing the diſtributions of foodſtuffs for the city. The captains accuſed this official of having favored his aſſociates rather than objectively focusing on the welfare of the city. In reſponse, the functionaries of the board denied the captains' roles as official repreſentatives of the *contrade*, as they reſuſed to engage with their demands.

Yet owing to the military needs of the grand duke, military conſcription had been reinſtituted in Tuscany, leading to the *contrade* and their captains having an increaſingly public and official role within Siena. In fact, in 1778, juſt over a decade after the incident with the ſuperintendent, the grand duke called on the *contrade* to form the backbone of the civic guard, which was divided up by thirds (*terzi*) under the leadership of a tenant and five corporals choſen by the grand duke. Within each *contrada*, a citizen aſſembly ſelected 60 communal ſoldiers who would take part in the moſt important *contrada* and civic events of the year, for which they would receive a ſalary. Ultimately, the grand duke did away with the civic guard, following protests and an upriſing in 1791 that broke out when an innocent perſon was ſtruck by a corporal during the Auguſt Palio. Though the civic guard wouldn't ſurvive, its creation highlighted the ever more central role that the *contrade* were playing in civic life. As the Medici had firſt underſtood, the *contrade* and the celebration of the Palio gave the Sieneſe a means through which they could come together in a public way that affirmed their paſt, their collective values, and their chief identity as *contradaio*li and Sieneſe citizens.

Economically, however, at the turn of the nineteenth century, too many in Siena ſtill ſtruggled to find employment. One ſolution initiated under the grand



FIGURE 6.1 Pietro Leopoldo. The grand duke of Tuscany, Peter Leopold of Habsburg, 1770 (Anton Raphael Mengs, El Prado, Madrid)

duke was to boost the city's economy by providing new educational opportunities for Sienese women. Upon reports of nobles abusing their guardianship of Siena's pious institutions, Leopoldo intervened: he abolished the Monna Agnese hospital, turning it into a school that incentivized female labor, and reformed the schools of San Girolamo and Santa Maria Maddalena, which educated middle-class women, as well as the School of the Refugio, which provided education and training for the

city's young women. Santa Maria della Scala continued to support many women in need, while also providing them with work across the city depending on their talents.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Siena was centuries removed from its pinnacle as a leading capital of European-wide importance, as it had been for much of the Republican age. The most prominent Siennese authors of the age were widely acclaimed in Tuscany, including Gigli and Bandini, but rarely beyond. The greatest Siennese scholar of the eighteenth century, Giovanni Antonio Pecci, besides single-handedly bringing the *contrada* of Aquila back to life, wrote exhaustively on Siena's bishops, rural communities, the reign of Pandolfo Petrucci, and the Siennese nobility. Stripped of their autonomy and political importance, the Siennese safeguarded and emphasized their historical patrimony more than ever. Pecci drew attention to Siena's rich history by writing the first-known guidebook for Siennese tourists in 1752, while Siena's medieval art found an important defender in the famed Guglielmo della Valle, who brought attention to Siena's artistic legacy in his *Letters* (1780s). As a result, Pietro Leopoldo first gathered together Siena's many artistic masterworks, which would later be displayed in the National Gallery.

French lights and shadows: Viva Maria!

The French Revolution arrived in Tuscany in 1792. Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, upon his ascension to the position of Holy Roman emperor in 1790, had been replaced by his ineffective son, Ferdinand III, leading the Siennese to dream of a revolution of their own. By the time of the French army's arrival in Tuscany, the French had already executed their king and crushed the armies of half of Europe, they found Siena's cultural and social elite ready to receive their innovative and egalitarian ideology. And thus, after centuries of efforts by nobles to reform the economy in order to aid the lower classes, the arrival of the French brought about a return to an earlier political mentality, the one found in the Lorenzetti frescoes: pursuing policies that supported the *ben comune*, the common good. There can be no doubt that the French were popular in Siena: in the *contrade*, we read about episodes of flag waving, balls, and masquerades, in a show of solidarity with the French ideology. Certainly, the majority of *contradaioi* shared with the revolutionaries a belief in the idea of "wealth rationing." As the grand duke's governor wrote in 1797, the French were spreading subversive ideas. Pope Pius VI clearly felt threatened by the French revolutionary movement which he declared to be a "monstrous system." Not without reason: the French took Pope Pius prisoner in 1798.

A few months later, the last terrible earthquake to date struck the city: it would have measured 8.5 on the Mercalli scale. The earthquake knocked down many of the city's towers that had stood as visible markers of noble family power for centuries. The Palazzo Pannocchieschi d'Elci in the Piazza del Campo was gravely



FIGURE 6.2 Loggia della Mercanzia. The Mercanzia's ornately decorated Loggia, frescoed at the end of the nineteenth century

damaged as were many other important structures, including the Theater of the Rinnovati, the church of the Refugio, and the San Cristoforo in Piazza Tolomei. In fact, San Cristoforo reached its current dimensions owing to its expansion in the aftermath of the earthquake. The restoration work throughout the city was intense, and it led to the introduction of buttresses and other supports that aimed to strengthen the weak walls found in many of the city's buildings. As the only institution with the means to finance Siena's recovery from the disaster, the Monte dei Paschi was forced to finance the city's reconstruction for years; and while there were some government funds, and other funds from the ecclesiastical patrimony, they did not go far enough.

As the Sienese sought to get through this difficult time, they faced another challenge, when on 29 March 1799, 500 French soldiers accompanied by 50 hussars on horseback entered the city through the Porta Camollia. The Sienese soon learned that the grand duke had abandoned Tuscany, and that Pope Pius VI was in France, where he would soon die. While the Sienese had initially been welcoming to the French and their revolutionary ideology, after seven years of French intervention in Tuscany, many in Siena were worried about French rule. And not without reason: while the French may have risen up through an ideology of liberty, equality, and fraternity, the republics that they had instituted in northern Italy had been denied their liberty, serving as puppet regimes for the French. Moreover, as the Jesuits and the Inquisition had already been banned in Tuscany, the Sienese weren't clamoring for the overthrow of the power of the Church. The French commissary gave an oration in the Campo where he attacked the grand dukes, calling them "imbeciles with scepters," and concluded that "reason, alone in the world, will have the throne and the crown."

With the arrival of the French and the discord brought about by the power struggles taking place across Europe, Siena found itself short on foodstuffs and was forced to resort to austere rationing. Together with new policies mandating obligatory conscription into the army, as well as the French's confiscation of silver and priceless historic treasures from Siena's churches, it is not surprising that the Sienese soon came to resent the French. Civic debates had little effect despite the fact that anticlerical and anti-tyrannical sentiments abounded.

The French occupation lasted for 110 days before an armed band of peasants, led by reactionary nobles, arrived at the Porta Romana from Arezzo, yelling *Viva Maria!*, an appeal to Siena's patron saint and to the city's Republican history. They entered the city without meeting any resistance. The archbishop decided to hole himself up in his new palace as the French fortified themselves within the Medicean fortress before ultimately departing from the city. This uprising against the French was tarnished by an appalling attack against Siena's Jewish ghetto. Nineteen Jews and one French soldier were dragged out and burned alive in the Piazza. It was the only episode of its kind in Siena, before or after.

In the aftermath of the French occupation, the grand duchy scrambled to restore the old guard in Siena. But the Sienese, buoyed by their show of unity in expelling



FIGURE 6.3 Siena's synagogue and inscriptions. Siena's early nineteenth-century synagogue with an inscription in memory of Sienese Jews killed during the "Viva Maria" riots

the French, agitated for better treatment by the duke's governor. Specifically, the captains of the 17 *contrade* accused the government of having imposed Leopoldo's reforms too rigorously, causing the city great harm. As a result, four members of the ducal government were sentenced to a month in prison and were prevented from ever holding office in the city again. The *contrade* attempted to ask for arms with which to move against the French, who had retaken Florence, only to have their request blocked out of a fear that the Sienese would use such a cause to fight for their independence.

Less than a year later, in 1801, Siena did switch sides once again, as a consequence of Napoleon's conquests and a number of international maneuvers by all of Europe's great powers. In the end, the Habsburgs were forced to cede Tuscany to the Bourbons of Parma, who were allowed to rule Tuscany on behalf of the French. With a name harking back to Tuscany's first inhabitants, the Kingdom of Etruria remade Siena as the capital of southern Tuscany under the leadership of a powerful the prefect. Tuscany was newly divided into three sections, with Siena's territory referred to as Ombrone, because of the river that united the territory; the name was selected, at least in part, because it would not conjure up any historic connotations. The commune was now naturally referred to as the *mairie*, French for town hall. French was used in public acts, and the French codices of law were extended to the city, even the civil one that provided for divorce, and the criminal one that provided for punishment by the guillotine, which was menacingly placed in the Piazza del Mercato.

The remains of the civil statutes were abrogated, as the highest court of justice was located in far away Paris. Likewise, the Siennese lost their hold over the Concistoro, thus stripping them of their control of all those bureaucratic positions they had zealously guarded for centuries. Even the university was temporarily dissolved, following a period of decreasing enrollment and low attendance. Only the Palio continued to be run, providing the Siennese with a crucial source of civic unity and some sense of continuity with their past. The signori of the festival became "deputy citizens of the festival," while the large imperial Napoleonic coat of arms appeared on the Palio drapery (*drappellone*) in an appropriate style. There was an exaltation of neoclassical rhetoric, with the jockeys of the August 1804 Palio even dressing as Greek heroes, even if, as one bystander noted, "they did not have the *phisque du role*."

A new imperial nobility sprang up and partly eclipsed the former one. This nouveau riche were largely the product of the nationalization of church property. It was an efficient way of shaking up the status quo and reorganizing the nobility, but the method was heavy-handed and left many Siennese angry at the patent theft and destruction of church property and benefices. An entire block of buildings, including sacred edifices, were destroyed in the territory of Montone in order to make room for the Palazzo Bianchi, which became the mayor's palace; the church of San Pellegrino was demolished in order to create the square now called Piazza Indipendenza; and the Palazzo dei Gesuiti was restructured and became the main office of the prefecture of Ombrone. Other places that were once sacred and rich in artistic treasures were turned into barracks, schools, or military warehouses, such as the church of the Confraternity of Santa Croce underneath the large church of Sant'Agostino, which today serves as the university's cafeteria. The tendency to reuse modified ancient structures has continued ever since, with mixed results. When the French left Siena for good in 1814, following Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig, the Siennese threw stones at the imperial insignia.⁴

The Lorena family in the age of restoration (1814–1859)

The French parenthesis had benefited few in Siena besides those property holders who had profited from the sale of ecclesiastical properties. In the end, after having endured extraordinary French spoliations and taxations and having eluded the epidemics of typhus and cholera that had raged elsewhere, Siena returned to some sense of normalcy. In considering the economic gains of the nineteenth century, one must remember the poverty of Siena's nobles at the end of the eighteenth, succinctly captured in the observation of English traveler Peter Beckford, who noted that Siennese nobles "could not permit themselves the luxury of a coach." The propensity toward entrepreneurial risks remained low compared to land investments, but the post-Napoleonic faith in a future clear from storms stimulated many public and private investment ventures. Moreover, the city benefited from the assured leadership of Giulio Bianchi Bandinelli, who served as governor of Siena during the first decades of the new century.

Over the first half of the nineteenth century, some of the areas located away from the city center but still within the walls were renovated, though not without the demolition of some churches, including San Lorenzo (which would later become the site of the entryway to the train station) and the monastery of Santa Petronilla. With the expulsion of the Bourbons, the Palazzo dei Gesuiti, which had been the main office of the prefecture, was turned over to the university, which had been reopened and at the beginning of its recovery. This palazzo has served as the university's headquarters ever since. The vast complex of Sant'Agostino, a convent that had been abolished and assigned to the commune, became the seat of the Tolomei boarding school, which abandoned Palazzo Piccolomini. This magnificent palace, once it was restructured, became the seat of public offices in Siena, and since 1858, it has been the location of Siena's state archives.

In those years, the communal library continued to collect published works, incisions, and other precious materials, which reinvigorated the collection of works that would become Siena's National Gallery, the singular collection demonstrating the richness of Siennese art. The Institute of Fine Arts was founded in 1816 as a branch of the Florentine Academy, while Siena's Academy of the Physiocrats took over the convent of the abolished Camaldolesi order (1816), constructing there a beautiful neoclassical meeting hall. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala became increasingly focused on medical operations and reopening its school of medicine, ceasing to function as an agency of social assistance. The most important new entity of the age was the psychiatric hospital of San Niccolò, located in a former convent from which it got its name. It admitted single pregnant women as well as those who had gotten worms.

The convent of Monte Oliveto, outside of the Porta Tufi, was radically transformed between 1843 and 1874 to accommodate the cemetery of the Misericordia, which was designed by architect Giuseppe Partini. The Misericordia had been reconstituted in 1838 within the convent of San Martino, and it continues to fulfill important social and emergency functions in Siena to this day. As was customary across Italy,

the cemetery of the Misericordia rapidly filled up with chapels and tombs of illustrious families, designed by the greatest Siennese artists of the age, from Tito Sarocchi and Giovanni Duprè to Cesare Maccari. Many of these artists trained at the Institute of Art run by Luigi Mussini (from 1851), while others studied and obtained fame elsewhere. Duprè, for example, was a sculptor who perfected his craft in Florence and gained international acclaim in France. At the age of 25, he created the work that is now widely considered to be his masterpiece, the moving *Abele morente* (1842), which was acquired by the tsar and is now at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

Beyond Duprè, nineteenth-century Siena produced a number of individuals of national and international achievement, including the art historians Ettore Romagnoli and Gaetano Milanesi and the publishers Onorato and Giuseppe Porri, who collaborated on the *Archivio storico italiano*, Italy's oldest historical periodical. Perhaps most famous was Tommaso Pendola from Genoa, who founded an institute for the deaf mute in Siena that joined social assistance with research, introducing innovative studies that continued for the next century and a half. It was suppressed only within the last few decades as part of a national reform of the social system. Other renowned Siennese figures of the nineteenth century include Giovanni Caselli, the inventor of a precursor to the fax (in 1856), the successful soprano Marietta Piccolomini, and the brilliant architect Agostino Fantastici, who created the historic great hall of the university, the monumental atrium of the Tolomei boarding school, the pharmacy of the Quattro Cantoni, and many villas and gardens.

Social and economic concerns in nineteenth-century Siena

Now that we've examined the political and cultural reality of nineteenth-century Siena, let us consider the question of how the common people of the age lived. Certainly, our familiarity with the recent twentieth century can profoundly distort our view of an earlier age. In fact, nineteenth-century Siena was a city in serious decline, with dilapidated buildings, high rates of illiteracy, and poor public health and high rates of illness because of poor sanitation practices as well as regular water shortages.

For employment, the Siennese found work in many traditional businesses as artisans and workers; carpenters and engravers; silver and blacksmiths; hat makers; confectioners; and beauticians. Almost all of these businesses employed dozens of dependents. One Jewish business owner, Ezechia Sadun, operated 60 looms for which he employed 142 workers.⁵ Those afflicted by the many problems of daily life found solace from their public marginalization by participating in the evening assemblies and the festivals of their *contrade*, as well as the civic celebrations during Carnevale and at the Palios. In particular, the Siennese lived by tradition within their *contrade*, spurred by memories of past Palios and showing great care for their neighborhood church or chapel, where the men and women of the neighborhood really felt at home and a part of something bigger than themselves.

While the *contrade*, together with their festivals, feasts, and participation in the Palio, provided members with a sense of community and pride, that same pride and loyalty to one's *contrada* often resulted in violence against enemy *contrade*. The races

frequently ended with clamorous brawls, leading a member of the Sergardi noble family to refer to Palio races in 1817 as “spectacles that were rather detestable.” In the same year, in order to avoid the tricks and bribes that often provoked the fierce inter-*contrada* fighting, the priors of the *contrade* requested that the commune change how and when the jockeys were selected, asking for them to be chosen by lot just a few moments before the races began.

In 1841, there were some who thought it best to take the *contrade* “out of the hands of the lowly members of the *popolo*” and have them be guided by “principled people of the first or second classes.” But the various regulations and systems of control always ended up being suppressed, as the *contrade* either refused to be controlled or blocked whichever regulations were proposed. Many in Siena appreciated the egalitarian nature of the *contrade* and believed that any changes would threaten the ancient ceremonials, leading the *contrade* to adopt a cultish-type ritualism in which anything traditional could not be changed, which, of course, made it difficult for any changes to be approved.

But despite the penchant of the *contrade* for all things traditional, soon another big development brought a current of modernity into the city. Policarpo Bandini, a liberal pharmacist, founded the Banca Senese, a discount bank to meet the needs of non-elites who often found themselves unable to obtain credit from the slow, agrarian, aristocratic management of the Monte dei Paschi bank. Bandini also managed to convince Siena’s authorities to invest in the ambitious project designed by engineer Giuseppe Pianigiani to bring the first railway to Siena. The project added to the existing line from Florence to Livorno by adding a branch traveling to Siena from Empoli. Tuscany’s first railway, the Leopolda, was inaugurated in 1849 with the participation of the grand duke and the *contrade*, who celebrated the achievement with an extraordinary Palio.

These were the years in which the policies of the grand duchy were increasingly repressive, dominated by the dynasty’s leaders in Vienna, and thus they aroused broad aversion by the Sienese population, including among the nobility. The first Sienese newspaper, *Il popolo*, was shut down in 1847. The following year, under the leadership of Count Corradino Chigi, a Tuscan academic battalion made up of many Sienese professors and students fought alongside the Piedmontese army against Austria at Curtatone. In that same year, the grand duke moved his family to Siena for security reasons before setting sail from the port of Santo Stefano and then establishing a republican triumvirate in Florence.

In those years, the management techniques of a few agrarian businesses in Siena had become particularly innovative, such as the Sansedoni farm in southern Siena that utilized agrarian advances made by Florentine academics. In fact, these techniques were easily adaptable in the Sienese countryside, where the practice of dividing large properties into smaller sharecropping farms was widespread.

Siena greatly benefited from the grand duke’s mid-nineteenth-century reorganization of the territories in Tuscany. In contrast to Leopoldo’s restoration of the borders of the higher province in 1766, which had cost Siena significant territory, in 1848, Siena retrieved Poggibonsi and Colle Val d’Elsa, while also gaining San Gimignano, which it had not previously controlled. Siena also gained Montepulciano, as well

as Castellina, Gaiole, and Radda, the so-called Florentine Chianti. This configuration of territories was enormously beneficial for Siena, as the people of the Chianti region soon discovered a broader market for their wines, while to the north in the region of Val d'Elsa numerous industries began to develop, owing to the influx of foreign capital. Indeed, industrialization had arrived in Tuscany. In Colle Val d'Elsa alone, thanks to hydraulic energy, seven paper factories, two furnaces, a felt hat-making factory, two dye shops, two leather factories, two wool factories, two steel mills, and a glass factory all opened between 1850 and 1870, providing new economic opportunities and employment for many of those living in Sienese territory.

Unification strengthens the civic dream

The new course rapidly accentuated the processes that were already underway. The nobility had begun to fear the loss of their class privilege, as well as their control over the rural citizenry. Many nobles felt compelled to keep a closer watch over their sharecropping properties in Siena's rural communities. At the Monte dei Paschi, in 1863, noble privilege decreased, as the rules were changed broadening eligibility regarding who the commune could nominate to serve within the bank's governing body, traditionally called the *Deputazione*. In another sign that Sienese values were changing, in 1860 the university's department of theology was abolished, and in 1864 the constitution of the "free thinkers of Siena" was drafted. Simultaneously the traditional candlelit procession during the vigil of the Assumption was abolished.

In the city, the wealthy and cultured bourgeoisie played an increasingly central role in civic affairs. There were even some mayors who were not of Siena, like Luciano Banchi from Radicofani, who became the tireless historian of the Republic. It was in these years, in fact, that historians first began to apply a scientific rigor to the historical discipline, yielding all kinds of new studies that brought Siena's medieval and Renaissance past to light while also strengthening the collective imagination of the citizenry and its civic identity. The *contrade* themselves thus assumed their official uniforms (*monture*) that were inspired by the mood of the time, as the taste for the medieval triumphed everywhere, even in advertisements for *panforte*. Soon, the same impulse toward Siena's past brought about the *drappelloni*, the name for the Palio flag given to the winning *contrada*; since 1894, the Sienese have carried on a tradition that continues to this day in which a local artist paints a unique image of the Virgin and *contrade* on a cloth, specific to that Palio. Each *contrade* displays the *drappelloni* they received for winning past Palios in their *contrade* museum. The greatest Sienese architect of the day, Giuseppe Partini, was also reverent toward Siena's past, creating an architectural style that beautifully fit in with the city's medieval and Renaissance buildings. Among his many projects in and around Siena, Partini designed the new facade and the square of Rocca Salimbeni (the present-day headquarters of the Montepaschi) and reorganized the Fonte Gaia in the Piazza del Campo and the large entryway to the Palazzo Pubblico.

By the end of the 1860s, Siena had 23,000 inhabitants living within the city walls and a little more than 200,000 total inhabitants within the province. Almost half of the inhabitants were illiterate. With the unification of Italy nearly complete,

the Sienese launched an effort aimed at elevating the city's underclasses through initiatives that provided "mutual assistance" between the city's many types of laborers (*operai*) – which included the artisans. Contemporary to this initiative was the emergence of the first mutual assistance "societies" or associations within the *contrade*: in Giraffa in 1872, and in Onda and Nicchio the following year. These associations were created by and for members of the *contrade* (*contradaio*li) and organized social activities of various types at the district or neighborhood level, from schooling to childcare. These associations, however, had to assiduously avoid the label of "moral entities," as such an appellation was likely to lead to intervention from civic and religious administrators. As a result, the *contrade* prudently referred to their assistive associations as "institutions of charity." On the whole, these associations provided the Sienese with a means of focusing on the civic good in a way that was tangible at a time when political representation was still very limited. Another development, the establishment of the Mens Sana in Corpore Sano in 1871 quickly changed the city's sports culture. New activities were offered, and women too were encouraged to participate in physical education programs.

Siena's demographics were changing, as many youths from southern Italy began to attend university in Siena, which consisted of only a few hundred students.⁶ The university was strongly supported by the city, against the recurrent attempts to suppress it owing to its small size. The Monte dei Paschi also helped significantly in financially supporting the university. It was not just a question of prestige or to provide jobs to the educated class, but the university was also an important institution of public health: the state-run polyclinic of the university was the first of its kind in Italy (1886), and employed 212 medics in 1909. The new civic governing class was thus determined to safeguard the traditional institutions of the city, especially those institutions that provided essential services, employment, and social welfare.

In 1871, according to the official city records, there were only 805 "employees" in the city and another 939 "domestic" workers, composed mostly of poorly compensated women, though men did sometimes work in the domestic sphere and women were employed in other ways as well. The main economic development of the age was the city's decisive embrace of the new lay culture, which was liberal, and often anticlerical, leading 28 of Siena's 30 convents located within the city walls to change their institutional mission, following new episodes of ecclesiastical suppression in the late 1860s. The city put up plaques in honor of two famous sixteenth-century Sienese heretics, Fausto and Lelio Socini, as a way of honoring those who had been persecuted for their willingness to stand up to religious authority in the name of truth. More broadly, it is clear that religious culture needed to be updated to meet the changing needs of society. One of the only survivors was the medieval brotherhood of the Disciplinati, which avoided suppression by becoming the Society of Performers of Pious Acts; it survives to this day.⁷ The institution of the Misericordia became increasingly important in its work helping the sick and poor in Siena. At the same time, institutions of social welfare during the second half of the nineteenth century were most

commonly not religiously affiliated, such as the Association of Public Assistance, founded in 1895.

Changing societal values also brought about new criticism of the *contrade*. The mayors in the 1870s regularly clashed with the *contrade*. They pushed to make *contrade* statutes uniform; the government also sought to enforce new legislation requiring that the *contrade* receive approval to assemble, which was fiercely criticized and rejected by the Siennese. Siena's widely read newspaper, *Il libero cittadino*, did not lose any occasion on which to thunder against the world of the *contrade*, calling the *contrade* system the "stuff of priests and squares," in 1873. The next year, the governing class complained that the people of the *contrade* lived through "the Palio, the church, and the flask." In these years, in the midst of such hostility toward the *contrade*, Siena's liberal governing class closed down the official race of the Assumption on 15 August, leaving in place the two Palios that are still celebrated each year on 2 July and 16 August.

Despite the governing class' general distaste for the world of the *contrada*, there was no denying its popularity among the broader Siennese population. The rhythm of the seasons was rooted in *contrada* functions, social gatherings, festival celebrations, and in the business of the Palio. While some elites may have opposed what they viewed as the lowbrow nature of the *contrada* system, the general population's solemn respect for upholding the rituals and rules governing the *contrade* and the Palio, besides the social function that the associations of the *contrade* served, could not but be appreciated as time passed. Moreover, at a minimum, governing elites certainly recognized that the *contrade* provided a healthy outlet for the lower classes at a time of increased class consciousness and social change. After all, as Machiavelli had famously warned, governments do well to "keep the people busy with festivals and spectacles." Thus, it is not surprising that the commune conceded a considerable sum to the *contrade* for the replacement of their costumes for the historic parade and Palio celebration in August 1878. The *contrade* obtained a new prominence for their role in organizing a torchlight procession welcoming the Italian heads of state, King Umberto I and Queen Margherita, to Siena in 1887. The king even became an honorary grand protector of the *contrada* of Oca; shortly thereafter, the *contrada* of Tartuca received the same protection.⁸ Over the next couple years, the king also conferred new emblems to the *contrade*, with both the king and the *contrade* viewing the other as bolstering their legitimacy and local standing.

The willingness of the *contrade* to align themselves with the patronage of the Italian king and queen roped them into the politics of the day. In particular, the *contrade* were forced to confront a new political and social landscape that witnessed the clashes between moderates and Socialists (the powerful leftist political party founded in 1892) and the bitter divisions between Catholics and secularists. In fact, out of a concern that the *contrade* would be sucked into contemporary politics (rather than their usual obsession with the timelessness of the *contrade* rituals and celebrations), the *contrade* were compelled to create a chief governing body for the *contrade*, the Magistrate of the Contrade, in 1895 and pass a statute requiring that the *contrade* were not allowed to formally take a position in conflicts between

the laity and Catholics, and the moderates and the Socialists. Despite this general pledge, the Socialists viewed the *contrade* as conservative and antithetical to the labor movement; they summed up the *contrade* as the defenders of “homeland and religion,” and thus more likely to oppose radical social and economic change. As a result of their suspicions of the *contrade*, the Socialists actually asked for the dissolution of the *contrade* altogether.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Monte dei Paschi broadened its business by taking on different kinds of projects that were deemed useful to the public. In fact, the Monte had funded the Wars of Independence and the 1862 congress of Italian scientists. It also helped finance the agrarian sector, with innovations that produced tobacco, for example. The Sieneese nobility at the time was in decline, with just 113 families able to claim noble descent in 1911. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Siena’s path had largely been set: the city’s deputies were moderate liberals who benefited from their close partnership with the Monte dei Paschi and its deep pockets. The bank, too, benefited from its relationship with Siena’s political elite in times of crisis. For instance, the city bailed out the bank in 1872, and for a time, the bank was placed entirely under the control of the commune, since, as the statute said, the city “gave [the bank] its origin.” A decade and a half later, during a period of widespread banking crises (1888–1893), the government was forced to intervene once more to save the bank from collapse. These bailouts point to the importance of the bank to Siena: it was closely tied to a Sieneese elite whose own financial well-being depended on the survival of the bank. The bank only had 15 employees in 1863 (the commune employed a total of 235 employees); however, by 1906, the bank had five times as many employees, its financial resources had quadrupled, and the reserves had increased tenfold.⁹ This success coincided with the Monte’s expansion of operations outside the Sieneese state for the first time, with the bank even opening a branch in Florence.

Substantial developments in the new century

Many things happened in a few years, which changed the civic landscape. In 1902, the first sharecropping strikes occurred at a national level. The events surrounding the sharecropping phenomenon interest us because it rapidly became (and remained) the “big” question of Sieneese history for much of the century. In Tuscany, the peasants struck in Chianciano, Chiusi, and Sarteano, and they gave indications about changes that were taking place in the Tuscan countryside, even if the Left did not comprehend at first what was truly going on. The socialist newspaper *L’Avanti* mischaracterized those sharecroppers as co-proprietors, who lived “in an isolated atmosphere of misoneism and of diffidence towards the petty bourgeois,” while in Bologna, striking had been derided as “not only useless, but even dangerous.” The most robust signals of worker organization came from the industrialization of Colle Val d’Elsa, where the Socialist party had managed to take over the commune in 1897. In the Amiata region, the laborers working in the mercury mines were less

successful in organizing, as the elites who oversaw the Monte Amiata corporation maintained a strong grasp of the mechanisms of social control.

Communal territory reached its present day size when the commune absorbed the countryside immediately outside the ancient city walls into its jurisdiction in 1904. In time, this meant that Siena's political elite had to consider the needs of a broader constituency of other social classes. In the census of 1911, Siena's population was recorded at 41,000, owing to the 1904 measure that had enlarged the boundaries of the commune. Of this population, the work force was recorded at a little more than 3,400. On the whole, the Sieneese were underemployed and lacked any major industries. With the exception of the bank, the vast majority of Siena's 463 businesses had fewer than ten employees.

Perhaps the most important development that came with the arrival of the twentieth century, if only visible with hindsight, was the rise of Siena as a tourist destination. Foreigners like William Heywood, who wrote a guide to Siena and a book on the Palio in English, and Robert Langton Douglas, who exalted Siena's medieval history and the city's mystique, publicized the city in the Anglo-American world. In fact, their works helped stimulate an exhibit of ancient Sieneese art in 1904 that, together with the Burlington Fine Arts Club of London, brought attention to the historical importance of Siena's artistic tradition. In particular, Siena's great thirteenth- and fourteenth-century artists were finally recognized as true visionaries who helped advance the visual arts through their bold and inventive paintings, paving the way for the Italian Renaissance.¹⁰ With Siena's central role in the development of Western art increasingly recognized around the world, art historians like Bernard Berenson as well as art collectors and dealers alike flocked to Siena to acquire medieval works, many of which sat forgotten in storehouses or abandoned in small rural churches.

Meanwhile, the Palio attracted foreigners thanks to Heywood's work, which helped make the city increasingly famous and popular to the outside world, spurring travelers from all over the world to visit the city and witness the Palio. In the first years of the twentieth century, the commune and the magistracy of the *contrade* came to an agreement regarding the costumes. Owing to the renewed interest in medieval and Renaissance Siena, they decided that the uniforms of the *contrade* should reflect the Renaissance style, a decision that remains in effect today. Though the number of visitors to Siena a century ago was only a fraction of the millions who visit today, it is nonetheless true that the Sieneese increasingly came to realize the value of their history, monuments, and artistic masterpieces. Tourism, for better or worse, would only become an ever more present part of Sieneese life.

These were years of ferocious and well-informed polemics in Siena's newspapers, which reflect the time period well: a time of transition, full of hopes and fears. Even the communal support of Renaissance-style costumes had become a political issue in Siena, as the Left launched new and heavy attacks on the conservative nature of the *contrade*, which was seen as an obstacle to a maturing class consciousness. It is true that Siena remained more moderate than even the countryside in these years. In fact, thanks to the countryside, a Socialist won the elections of 1909 and 1913,

defeating powerful characters in Siena, Enrico Falaschi and Alfredo Bruchi. In the city itself, however, the traditional moderate majority continued to hold power.

The Siennese finally managed to complete the vast work on the aqueduct that brought water all the way from Vivo, in the Amiata region, to Siena, though it would take several more decades before the city's engineers would manage to distribute the water throughout the whole city. In fact, indoor plumbing only came to the entire city after World War II. Six thousand soldiers from Siena's province were killed in World War I, and the many thousands of veterans who returned made the difficult political situation even more challenging, particularly in the countryside.

From the "Red Biennium" to the triumph of Fascism

The first communal elections in the province after World War I resulted in broad and resounding success for the Left, which gained control of 30 of the 35 communes in the province of Siena. Just as it seemed that those supporting the lower classes were finally gaining enough support to effect change, the elites struck back, leading to two years of intense social conflict throughout Italy, known as the "Red Biennium," and the rise of Fascism in Italy. In particular, elites whose wealth was rooted in property, feared the loss of their privileged status, as their taxes on land-holding income were substantially increased. On top of this, elites were subjected to unfavorable reforms based on the colonial pacts of 1920. In response, the propertied classes helped the Fascist movement form and gain strength, as the Fascists in fact supported the use of brute force and fierce intimidation tactics to frighten and cow leftist organizations that were attempting to institute radical societal reforms. In 1921, hundreds of workers gathered at the Casa del Popolo to protest Fascism. In response, 200 troops opened fire on the workers and then let Fascist squads plunder the building and set it on fire. The *contrade* participated in the funeral of one of the people killed in the attack, the railway employee Enrico Lachi,¹¹ though the *contrada* of Oca was heckled since it was thought to be pro-government. This brutal attack sparked countless others across Tuscany, as local police and government officials either declared themselves for the Fascist cause or were compelled to acquiesce to their demands. Despite the fact that the Left had broader support than the Fascist regime, the willingness of the Fascists to resort to violence would allow them to secure authoritarian power over the whole of Italy.

That's what led to the March on Rome in October 1922, when Fascist troops entered Rome, threatening violence and insurrection. Fearing that the Italian army wouldn't be able to stop the Fascist troops, King Victor Emmanuel III appointed Benito Mussolini as prime minister. With the ascension of the Fascist party, the Left lost any hope of fighting back. Back in the province of Siena, sharecroppers lost whatever they had been able to tear away from the landholders, in large part because of the brute force of the Fascist squads. Whatever the property owners felt about the Fascists' tactics, there is no denying that they felt obligated to help a political movement that had clearly favored them. Having come to power through violence and repressive measures, the Fascists found willing collaborators among the liberal

left and together, they balanced the national budget thanks to an economy that was roaring back to life. Fascism's interclass embrace meshed well with the Church, which preached concord among the classes. Siena's religious leaders proved willing to work with the Fascist regime, as did the Church as a whole, as most clearly demonstrated by the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

As a result, in the age of Fascism, Siena's long era of liberal anticlericalism, which had begun more than a half century before, gave way to a new conciliatory course, personified in the erudite and capable Fabio Bargagli Petrucci. He first served as mayor in 1923 and then for a decade as *podestà*: the medieval office had been reinstated, as part of the Fascist propaganda that romanticized the past by promising to make Italy great again. While having to contend with the demands of Fascists ruling from Rome, Bargagli Petrucci's government oversaw several notable urban projects, all of which were approved without discussion in the Communal Council, since the Fascists had abolished it. In accordance with the Fascist agenda, the projects were primarily aimed at promoting Siena's rich history and historical patrimony in order to make the city more of a tourist destination. Projects included the construction of a beautiful railway station by Angelo Mazzoni, the creation of the Civic Museum in the Palazzo Pubblico, a permanent exhibit at the Communal Library, and the stadium located near San Domenico. The area of Siena known as Salicotto also witnessed a major restructuring and series of renovations during this time (1927–1935), which helped end the outbreaks of tuberculosis that had long affected those living in the *contrada* of the Torre.¹² Together with the art historian Cesare Brandi and the archeologist Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Bargagli Petrucci began work on the long process of converting Santa Maria della Scala into a museum that celebrated Siena's artistic legacy, free from its healthcare functions. It was during this time of renewed interest in Siena's cultural heritage under Bargagli Petrucci that Count Guido Chigi Saracini financed the grand enterprise of the Musical Academy, which still today bears his name.¹³ More broadly, as *podestà*, Bargagli Petrucci was also responsible for the first law of its kind aimed explicitly at preserving Siena: it required that the city's many historical buildings could not be altered or worked on without permission and approval from the commune. This law helped secure Siena's patrimonial inheritance, ensuring that new building projects wouldn't demolish Siena's medieval and Renaissance past.¹⁴ Each of these projects represents the continuation of traditional Siennese culture, despite the profound political changes experienced in Siena during the Fascist age.

One way in which the Fascist regime ingratiated itself with the Siennese was through their embrace of the world of the *contrade*. In sharp contrast to the Socialists who had denounced the *contrade* as antiquated and debaucherous, the Fascists recognized the value of honoring Siena's distinct traditions. To cite one powerful example, under the Fascists, the Siennese reinstated the ceremony of presenting candles in honor of the Assumption, which reformers had abolished in 1864. By allowing for this ceremony to be reinstated, the Fascists were validating

the importance of history, routine, and ceremony to the Siennese, as the celebration was a moment of synthesis and civic religiosity, where the *contrade* delved into and expressed their traditions.

By 1926, the Fascists began an operation known as *entrismo* in Siena: they used the *contrada* associations in order to put their members in positions of power directly within the *contrade*. It is no coincidence that in the same year, we see the first appearance of the Fascist symbol, the Fasces (*fascio littorio*), on the *drappellone* for that year's July Palio, which can still be seen in the museum of the winning *contrada* of Pantera. With the national success of the regime in the 1930s, the Fascists pursued the operation of *entrismo* far more boldly in Siena. They even required that the *contrade* take part in the national Fascist organization for leisure and recreation, known as the *Dopolavoro*, through which Fascism was promoted and Fascist values instilled. Fascist allies were placed in leadership positions within all associations and used their roles to compel all of the inhabitants of the territory to adhere to their particular societies as a means to further spread and ensure support for the Fascist ideology and agenda.

Whether out of fear or general agreement with the fascist cause, Siennese authorities had proven themselves more than willing to work with Mussolini and pliable to regime requests. An example of Siena's coziness with fascism can be seen in Mussolini's decision to reward Siena's allegiance by elevating Siena's Palio to a unique cultural position by denying other cities with similar traditions the official "Palio" designation, including Legnano, Asti, and Ferrara. Certainly, this helped identify Siena even more directly with the Palio in the eyes of cultured foreigners and powerful visitors and helped promote tourism to the city. Given the nature of Siena's relationship with Fascist authorities as well as the role of Fascist allies within the *contrada* leadership, one can understand why any real opposition to the fascist cause was so limited in Siena, despite widespread discontent. Even at the university, the regime did not find any refusals when the faculty were forced to swear loyalty to the fascist government, though many claimed afterward that they acquiesced to pledging fealty only out of compulsion.

The events surrounding the Monte dei Paschi at the time also help in explaining the acquiescence of the Siennese state to Mussolini and the Fascist cause. During the previous half century, the Monte had succeeded under competent and responsible management, in part because of government support and in part because of smart institutional policies. In particular, the bank had benefited from the government's interventions made during the rescues of 1907 and 1914. Moreover, as a consequence of the bank statute from 1872 that forced the Monte dei Paschi to maintain greater reserves than its contemporaries, Siena's chief bank was able to weather the collapse of the world economy in 1929. In fact, the crisis actually strengthened the bank, as it had the resources to undertake new important rescue operations that enriched its portfolio. Moreover, the bank's own holdings didn't suffer from the crash, in large part because of its traditional distance from the industrial sector, which had been devastated by the global economic crisis.

In 1936, a new statute profoundly changed the Siennese character of the bank by concentrating power in the hands of the president-director, Alfredo Bruchi, who

had served as the bank's commissioner for 20 years. The Fascist regime pressured Bruchi to consolidate control over the bank so that it could likely be transferred to Rome. Such a move led Bargagli to present himself as the champion of the interests of Siena's citizenry, and he had the courage to resign in protest against Mussolini. Bruchi, on the other hand, would serve the Fascist regime first as a deputy and later as a senator. Around the same time, as part of a number of global reforms regarding the Italian banking system passed by Mussolini, the Monte dei Paschi, along with only five other Italian banks, was labeled as a credit institution of public law. Such a law allowed the bank to acquire smaller financial institutions, greatly enriching the bank. Yet as the bank gained in wealth and importance, the Fascists increasingly worked to wrestle the bank away from the city. By the late 1930s, the Sienese risked losing control of the bank's governing board until Siena's *podestà*, Luigi Socini Guelfi, worked out a compromise with the Fascist regime in 1939. The deal required that the majority of the bank's deputies come from the commune and the province of Siena.¹⁵

The year 1940 saw Italy enter World War II, joining the Axis Powers. By the end of 1942, the German-Italian alliance had conquered the Mediterranean, making Mussolini's ambition of restoring the Roman Empire seem possible. Yet by the time of the American invasion of Sicily the following summer, Italy had descended into civil war and Mussolini had lost his grip on power, having lost the support of King Victor Emmanuel III. By April of 1945, Mussolini was dead, the Fascist nightmare had come to an end, and the war was at last over. In Siena, the recovery had already begun.

Notes

- 1 Over the course of the eighteenth century, it had around 20 employees, including administrators.
- 2 There were even rumors floating around that the Jews were gaining by giving loans that had been taken from the Monte Pio! For this reason, in 1746, it was decided that the sale of new *luoghi* (credit shares) would cost an additional 25,000 scudi, raising 300,000 scudi *as capital*.
- 3 In 1759, the collective guarantee of the citizens was already lacking.
- 4 At least the French had respected the Palio and the *contrade*. In fact, they'd held a Palio in 1810 in honor of Napoleon's wedding, along with a nice lunch in the square for six poor members of each *contrada*.
- 5 The Jewish synagogue in Siena, which was not far from the Piazza del Campo, in the ghetto, was restored and splendidly adorned and received an official visit from Leopold II in 1833.
- 6 The number of students reached 400 during the Fascist period.
- 7 Its official headquarters are still located under the vault of Santa Maria della Scala.
- 8 In order to avoid malcontents, King Victor Emanuel III declared himself the protector of all the *contrade* in 1904.
- 9 In 1901, there were only four employees in the credit and insurance departments.
- 10 The renewed appreciation for medieval art in Siena encouraged the work of an ingenious painter, Icilio Joni, an orphan raised at Santa Maria della Scala. At the end of the 1800s,

Joni began to paint in the medieval style and got so good at copying the masters that some of his work wound up in well-known museums around the world. Joni certainly encountered the great curator of Italian art, Bernard Berenson, who was baptized at the Abbey of Monte Oliveto.

- 11 The *contrada* of Oca was heckled since it was thought to be pro-government.
- 12 Back in 1915, a communal sanitary official had first recommended renovating Salicotto for this same reason.
- 13 The Academy is now, problematically, under the sponsorship of the Monte dei Paschi Foundation.
- 14 From where we get the First Regulatory Plan for Siena (1932).
- 15 Satisfaction with the result was so high that, for example, the people from the “neighborhood of Fontebranda” (Oca) sent an explicit thank you note to the *podestà*.

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7

SIENA FROM WORLD WAR II TO THE PRESENT DAY

The postwar economic boom

International sanctions, anti-Semitic laws, Italy's entry into the war, and the paranoia and pessimism of those years caused many to open their eyes to the horrors of Fascism in a short amount of time. Siena's political landscape couldn't adjust as quickly. The anti-Fascist militant movement had established only tenuous roots in Siena before the end of the war in 1945.¹ Fortunately for the city, there were no large clashes during the time of the liberation, and the city had largely been spared from bombardment, at least in part because of its qualification as a "hospital city."² When the exigency for war was extinguished and the Allies were making their way northward, Siena's *podestà*, Luigi Socini Guelfi, put together a civic guard made up of volunteers to assist in the liberation of the city, many of whom were members of the Committee for National Liberation. Lelio Barbarulli, a respected Siennese soldier and veteran of the Russian campaign, was selected to oversee the guard and to keep the peace until the transfer of power had been completed.

There were ugly episodes of partisan vendettas against the Fascists, including the torturing of political prisoners in Siena in retaliation for the violence and suffering they'd inflicted on the population during the 25-year period of Fascist rule. Still, on the whole, in contrast to other places, including Florence, bloodshed was largely avoided in Siena, thanks to the actions of Siennese anti-Fascist leader Mario Bracci, who convinced the Germans to leave Siena discreetly, thus avoiding a fight for the city upon the arrival of the Americans. The Siennese received the Allies with great celebration when they entered the city on 3 July 1944, and the Siennese then began the work of rebuilding the civil and political fabric of the city. In terms of damage, serious bombardments had affected only the train station and the fifteenth-century church of San Bernardino all'Osservanza, which was almost completely destroyed

by a stray American bomb, though the church was carefully reconstructed after the war.

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) proved to be the only political party able to rapidly entrench itself in Siena's territorial context after the war. Among the Sieneese political parties, all of which were operational by January 1944, there were Catholics and Liberals as well as apolitical soldiers, but the supremacy remained in the hands of the Communists, who had broad support among the sharecroppers, who comprised the majority of the population in the countryside.

To understand the success of the Communist party in Siena, it helps to consider the condition of Sieneese sharecroppers at the end of World War II. In the arid and difficult "treeless Tuscany" of Siena's hinterland, in comparison to the Florentine-dominated Tuscany of the river, the rural population had struggled mightily under fascism. Fascist undersecretary Serpieri had attempted to pass numerous reforms that would have improved the lot of sharecroppers: offering them insurance to offset their risks, giving sharecroppers the status of the working class, and allowing them the right to manage their own work hours and time off. However, influential Tuscan landholders were able to block all of his reforms from becoming law, and in their place, the Fascists' Sharecropping Charter (*Carta della mezzadria*) of 1933 was passed, which set national guidelines that protected the landholders. As a result, sharecroppers actually lost ground under the Fascists, owing to the Patto di Fossa (Ditch Pact) of 1935, which increased sharecroppers' financial burden by requiring them to pay half of the expenses for irrigation and drainage maintenance. Even worse, legislation passed in mid-1938 aimed at giving sharecroppers greater ownership over livestock ended up being manipulated by the landlords, who used the law to put their sharecroppers even deeper in debt.

As a result of all of these policies, Siena's hinterland had been left worse off after Fascist rule, with poverty and grief a regular part of life for the hundreds of thousands of Tuscan peasants. In the aftermath of the war, every political party in Siena besides the Communists, including the Liberals, the moderate leftists known as the Actionists, and the Christian Democrats, all embraced the ideology of the landholders. With the slogan "the Land to those who work!" the PCI found broad support among sharecroppers that allowed for their ascension to power in the postwar era.

Three weeks after the end of the war, the national leftist association of landworkers known as the Federterra first met in Siena. The communal juntas in the territories operated with the support of the peasants, and the landholders were forced to sign unfavorable agreements opposite military police officers who were powerless to intercede on their behalf. The anti-communist appeals of the priests fell on deaf ears. The struggle between landlords and sharecroppers wasn't over – as confirmed by the violence committed by both sides in the early years of the postwar era, including the attempted assassination of Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, the destruction of various headquarters of the Christian Democrats, and the murder of two authorities at Abbadia San Salvatore (in the Amiata) as well as a

syndicalist. Still, in terms of political support, communism was on the ascendancy in the province of Siena.

One of the reasons the Communists found such broad support in Siennese territory was, paradoxically, the overwhelming wealth and power that the landholders possessed. Siennese peasants only owned approximately 5 percent of the land, the lowest percentage of peasant landownership in Tuscany. As a result, they proved more unified and receptive to the reforms pushed forward by the Communists. In other words, the world of the peasantry was largely homogeneous from a cultural and material point of view, and they were thus more easily united in the fight against the landholding class.

Over the next two decades, the peasants would win their independence from sharecropping contracts not through their conquest of the land but through their willingness to abandon the land and move to the city. This mass urbanization coincided with a significant increase in the number of public sector jobs in Siena, especially at the Monte. Siena's university also expanded exponentially during this time as well, corresponding to a general trend across Italy, as universities grew to accommodate the increased number of students seeking an advanced degree. The growth at Siena's university was staggering: while the student population was only 1,300 students in the 1950s, by 1976, it had increased to around 10,000 students.

From a population of 40,000 during the Fascist era and 52,000 in 1950, Siena's urban population surged to its highest level in its history by 1970, climbing to 66,000 inhabitants. Conversely, for the province the population dropped from 282,000 in 1957, its highest population in its history, to roughly 250,000 in 1970, with many peasants immigrating to Emilia, Lombardy, Piedmont, Florence, and Arezzo. Supported by the Communist party and provided with employment opportunities in the city, the percentage of the rural peasantry bound by contractual sharecropping contracts plummeted, from 31 percent in 1960 to only 6 percent in 1980; finally in 1982 sharecropping contracts were forbidden by law. Even today, in the age of widespread agritourism entities, the population in the Siennese countryside has not recovered from the exodus of the 1950s and 1960s. While it is still below prewar levels, the population in the province has since stabilized, thanks to emigrants from Sardinia, Albania, and Romania who have populated parts of the rural areas, allocating the land for intensive livestock rearing.

When one considers the rural peasantry's long history of suffering under oppressive conditions, the failure of Italy's other political parties to address the issues, as well as the migration of the peasantry to the city, it is easy to see how the Communist party would come to dominate the political landscape after World War II. In fact, despite the fact that Siena had many "moderates" and supporters of the Catholic movement, the Communists (with an assist from the socialists) won control of all 35 communes in the province and the city of Siena itself. The mayors and the administrators of the Communist party were former peasants and laborers, including individuals from the Val d'Elsa and Amiata regions, where there were large numbers of workers who toiled in the mines under very difficult conditions.

A former bricklayer from Sovicille, Vittorio Bartini, who had had been taken by the Fascist squads, condemned by the special tribunal for the defense of the state, and interned in Germany, became a prominent leader of the Communist party in Siena.

More broadly, from 1946 until the early 1990s, every mayor of Siena came from either the Communist or the Socialist party. Their political conquest of the city experienced temporary setbacks both in the commune (1949 and 1966) and within the Monte dei Paschi (1950–1955), where the Communist party clashed with representatives of the national government's Christian Democratic majority. But on the whole, the PCI succeeded in adopting a cultural and political approach that was open and malleable. Communist leaders like Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Luciano Mencaraglia, the economic historian Giorgio Giorgetti, and Luigi Berlinguer won the approval of Siena's intellectuals for their agenda, which led to a general political consensus in Siena. The alliance between the Communist party and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) remained strong throughout the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a period of good and stable governance for the city. Civic and intellectual leaders agreed on a shared set of goals and priorities, including the expansion of the university, the importance of public investment in Siena's historical and cultural patrimony, and a robust system of public and social assistance that benefited the lives of Sienese citizens of all ages and classes.

While Siena was flourishing in many ways, the postwar period was most notable for the sustained ascent of the Monte dei Paschi. With its enormous profits, the bank worked to enrich Siena's cultural and historical capital, with large investments in its artistic and architectural heritage. The bank also worked to improve the



FIGURE 7.1 The Monte dei Paschi di Siena and its square. The headquarters of the Monte dei Paschi bank and its square featuring a statue of Sallustio Bandini, The square restored at the end of the nineteenth century

quality of life of Siennese citizens through generous support of social assistance and other aid institutions in Siena. Moreover, the bank created two new departments at the university, the Department of Financial Banking, the only one in Italy, and the Department of Natural and Mathematical Sciences. Meanwhile, the city's technical institute for accountants, named after Sallustio Bandini, trained high school students for a career at the bank. In fact, 700 of the school's graduates went on to work at the bank between 1975 and 1990, a stunning example of how thoroughly the bank had become the lifeblood of the Siennese economy. The Monte became one of the largest banks in Italy, managing the treasury of the commune of Rome, along with many other important entities like it. From 817 Siennese employees in 1951, the number reached 3,048 by 1991. The competition for the highest positions inside the bank became a game of respect, open to many notable men and women, including people from outside of Siena, such as Marcello De Cecco, a professor at the university.

With the city government, through the Communal Council, responsible for appointing the majority of the bank's leaders, including the bank's president, the city and its bank developed an extremely close and mutually beneficial relationship. Aided as well by a significant influx of money from the national government as a result of new legislation incentivizing cities to restore their historical monuments, Siena engaged in many public works projects that changed the face of the city. Among those works of importance completed in the city center were the restoration work in the *contrada* of the Bruco, repair work on parts of the underground aqueducts, and the renovation of the facade of Palazzo Salimbeni, the headquarters of Monte dei Paschi, designed by architect Pierluigi Spadolini for the bank's quincentennial celebrations in 1972.

Outside the walls, work began on a grand new hospital, the Ospedale alle Scotte, which allowed the Siennese to begin the long process of converting the great Santa Maria della Scala into a museum open to the public. The city also built new locations for the university, including two student residences and cafeterias. Moreover, the city allocated significant funding for the construction of a new neighborhood close to the train station on the hill of San Miniato, which was intended to decongest the historical center of the city and be a model for innovative development. Siena's attempts at creating a thriving industrial zone and factory hub at Isola d'Arbia, in the southern part of the city, never had much success, with the notable exception of the Sclavo Serotherapy Institute. It was acquired by the multinational pharmaceutical company Novartis-Gsk, and made into a hub of the first order. Their chief scientist and head of External Research and the Development of Vaccines, Rino Rappuoli, is Siennese and a graduate of Siena's university.

Since the end of World War II, but particularly since the 1970s, tourism has been an increasingly important part of the Siennese economy. Numerous large exhibitions of Siennese art brought ever greater attention to Siena's cultural heritage, including memorable exhibitions featuring Jacopo Della Quercia and the Gothic, the Mannerists and Rutilio Manetti, and even moderns artists like Mino Maccari, the anti-Fascist dissident and the ingenious Siennese creator of the *Selvaggio*.³

Technological advances in media also allowed for Siena to spread its culture, as the Palio became a nationally televised event. Meanwhile, broadcasting companies like Canale 3 Toscana helped promote and aggrandize the events of the Palio through programs such as the ingenious *96 ore di Palio*. The Sienese sense of humor also gained national attention through the political-type satirical vignettes by Emilio Giannelli (in *Corriere della Sera*) and Sergio Manni, whose work continues to reach audiences across Italy today.

The postwar economic boom made life materially better than it had ever been in Siena, while the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s affected Italian culture everywhere. As people started dressing more casually and informally, class distinctions became less pronounced. The clergy rapidly lost their authority over an increasingly secular society. One source of continuity despite all the changes was the



FIGURE 7.2 Assignment of the horses for the Palio. Three days before the Palio, the ten participating *contrade* are each assigned one of the ten ballot horses by lottery in a public ceremony in the Campo

centrality of the world of the *contrade*. At the same time, the *contrade* too adapted to the changing times, specifically, the city's changing demographics. *Contrade* increasingly recruited transplants, including peasants from the countryside and the many new arrivals from the south who came to Siena to attend university or for work.

With the triumph of the service sector and the greater value given to the working class under the communists, the noble protectors who had long been venerated within the *contrade* disappeared. In their place to this day, *contrada* members are asked to pay an annual protector fee, with individuals offering voluntary contributions that are expected to be in proportion to one's means, in order to fund the work of the *contrada*, most especially the expenses of the Palio. The *contrade* came to serve as an expression of a popular world that was at times boorish but always impassioned. Older *contrada* members would continue to tell stories about the heroes from Palios to the *cittini* (kids of the *contrada*) between the slow chants sung in post-prandial gatherings of the *contrada* or along the typical streets in the lead-up to the day of the Palio. The legendary exploits of Palios long past might involve stories about winning *contrada* captains, legendary *fantini* (jockeys), or strict but well-intentioned *contrada* priests, who were responsible for blessing the horse in the *contrada* church before the race.

Every aspect of the Palio acquired some kind of technical name and significance even if such traditions and regulations only went back to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.⁴ These customs came to be respected ritualistically, as if a *contrada* might jeopardize its chances of winning by offending the spirits of Palios past, if it did not maintain every ritual and office associated with the event. In short, the Palio and the world of the *contrada* became (and has remained) sacred, where everything is ritualized and taken as is, without discussion, as if it were unchanging and timeless, even though, as we have seen, the rituals, celebrations, and even the significance of the Palio and the *contrade* have all evolved over centuries.

Even those on the left who had once viewed the *contrade* as a hindrance to secularism and progress ended up being won over by the culture of the Palio. In fact, leftist intellectuals from the 1960s have been the most prolific in studying and writing about the Palio and the world of the *contrade*, from anthropologists and historians, to sociologists and religious scholars. The singularity of the Palio events finally came to be appreciated by everyone, the greatest symbol of neighborhood and civic unity imaginable, regardless of political affiliation or social class.

The *contrade* acquired, as a result of all these changes, a certain visibility that was unimaginable before, strengthened by the explosion of tourism, television coverage, and international press. The Palio's stature as a singular spectacle unlike any other event on earth has only grown, though it's also been the subject of polemics raised by animal rights activists. Paradoxically, beginning in the 1960s and '70s, the life of the *contrada* has undergone greater and more rapid transformations than in the previous five centuries combined. For centuries, *contrada* membership was limited exclusively to the inhabitants of the territory, who easily found one another accordingly in the streets, squares, at the *contrada* meetings in the late afternoon, or out for an improvised dinner. However, in the postwar era, with the tumultuous expansion of the university and the traffic congestion that

was by then a part of life in the city center, many Sienese moved out of their old urban residences, which were often in desperate need of repair and updating, and into larger homes on the periphery with all the amenities. Others moved to save money, immigrating to any of a number of small communes outside the walls that too had experienced unimaginable development in those decades and, because of modern transportation, become more easily connected to the city of Siena than ever before.

But these demographic changes inevitably transformed the nature of the *contrada*. Siena dropped from a population of 66,000 in the 1970s to 54,000 in 2000, and the population has continued to decline, fostering population growth in the neighboring territories of Monteriggioni and Monteroni, above all. New initiation rights were created so that proud Sienese men and women whose families had belonged to *contrade* for centuries but who themselves lived elsewhere could still join the *contrade*: in the 1960s, the *contrade* introduced the formal ceremonies of baptism as a form of initiation, regardless of one's origin. Another effect of this emigration from the city center was that it naturally became more difficult to reenter the city, owing to congestion and limited parking, which in turn had the effect of decreasing one's presence in the *contrada*. Instead of living in your own *contrada* and seeing your fellow *contradaioi* daily, an ever more mobile *contrada* population was forced to create new opportunities for connection throughout the year through *contrada* dinners, feast day celebrations, processions, and Palio-related events. The *contrade* have, as a result of all of these changes, been transformed from an association of neighbors that shared a district into a community who reunites to initiate new *contradaioi*, share meals, catch up on family and community matters, and discuss their strategies for the next Palio. Only the social club (*società*) remains as a daily gathering space for *contradaioi*, though even these seem like a relic of another age, as the regulars are almost without exception retired people for whom the *società* provides their social community.

The magnificent 1990s: synthesis of a civilization

Thanks to the development of its chief entities, namely, the Monte dei Paschi, the university, and the hospital, as well as the boom in tourism, by the 1990s Siena was thriving economically and culturally. Siena had reconciled itself with its own past and was coming to recognize its grandeur; there was an awareness about the vitality of its legacy, even if many works of art and churches had been destroyed in the preceding centuries. Despite the losses, a great wealth of historical patrimony had been preserved and was finally receiving the careful scholarly attention it deserved and the resources, largely from the Monte, to ensure that objects of great historical importance were restored and maintained. Work finally began transforming the absolutely enormous complex of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. For centuries the hospital had expanded eventually growing to four stories and tens of thousands of square feet, in order to accommodate the city's many social assistance

programs and to build new branches of the hospital. During the long period of renovation, workers discovered many medieval rooms and works of art, many of which had never been seen by the public.

More broadly, it wasn't until the 1990s that the Siennese finally began to reconcile themselves with their long and complicated past: the grand passions aroused by Italy's unification, the injustices faced by sharecroppers, the city's alliance with the Fascist regime, and the subsequent deportation of Siena's Jews, as memorialized at the synagogue in Siena, in the first half of the twentieth century. At times in Siena's history, the cult of the past was a part of a broader ideological vision, as it had been for Bargagli Petrucci during his tenure as *podestà*. Only at the end of the twentieth century had the Siennese made peace with their city and developed a genuine pride in of its civic developments, recognizing the extraordinary difficulties that their ancestors and predecessors had overcome. This was particularly true when several major urban projects in Siena met unhappy ends, including the ugly distortion of the train station and the failure of the new neighborhood of San Miniato.

Politically, partisans from the Catholic Democratic Party and the PSI moved beyond their previous disagreements and worked to govern in a way that improved the lives of all Siennese, particularly the lower classes. Culturally, the postwar era witnessed the triumph of civic religion in modern Siena. For many Siennese, their relationship with the Church came to be rooted primarily in the Church's public functions, feast day celebrations for Siennese saints, civic events of importance, and a role in uniting the members of each *contrada* in the lead-up to the Palio. For the Siennese, their spectacular cathedral and the long history it represents is a tremendous source of pride. The *contrada* priests who bless the horse before the race as well as Siena's archbishop himself confer on the events of the city, the Palio, and the *contrade* a dignity and sacrality that legitimizes the *contrade* and elevates the Palio to a matter of holy significance.

Books examining all aspects of urban life, the *contrade* and the Palio, the city's art, architecture, history, institutions, and people have proliferated to an extent unrivaled outside of Italy's larger and more famous cities. Siennese historiography followed the broader trend among historians to move away from focusing primarily on institutions and the elite to instead focus on the lower classes and their lived experience, largely by studying the material culture and documentation that has survived across the centuries. Only in the last generation have scholars had the freedom to work on aspects of Siena's past that were less traditional, allowing for a far richer and more variegated understanding of Siena's past than ever before. Book presentations, adult education programs, lectures and conferences held to mark anniversaries of civic events, and much more were regularly organized at the university, the bank, or by the *contrade*. The institutions assumed, in this way, an almost educational function. Numerous musical and theatrical associations developed, all of which provided Siena with the type of cultural opportunities typically only found in a much larger city. Two examples are the highly successful

Siena Jazz summer concert series, as well as the classical music events of the Accademia Musicale Chigiana.

The Monte dei Paschi had grown and nourished itself based on a collective institutional and civic sense of the city. Many in Siena talked about the bank in a “familial” way, describing themselves as children of the institution, in much the same way that orphans at the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala had felt, once upon a time, that their core identity was inseparable from the hospital because they had been raised by it, readied for work and marriage there. One can imagine, then, the importance of being an employee of Monte dei Paschi, or a *montepaschini* as they were known, during the years in which the bank triumphed and the well-being of the city and the success of the bank were inseparably connected. It is not by chance that the employees of the Monte dei Paschi became mayors of the city as well as priors and captains of the *contrade*, occupying institutional positions filled with a prestige that was also a reflection of the bank’s prestige.

As Siena came to enjoy unprecedented economic well-being and political stability, the Sieneese seemed to, in many ways, have been willing to disregard not so much the “modern” as the external world. Even young people have come to live the traditions and the cult of tradition, being content to spend their lives in the city. In fact, as modern amenities were added to urban dwellings and traffic has made the suburbs less appealing, many have chosen to return to (or remain in) the historic city center. The problems of the railway connections and street traffic seem to attest to this tendency among the Sieneese to turn their gaze inward, on themselves: despite the billions spent on development in modern Siena, the Sieneese have failed to make Siena more accessible to the outside world. There are no trains that directly connect Siena to Italy’s other major cities. The general Sieneese population has been consistently opposed to efforts aimed at building a new Sieneese airport, out of an understandable concern that the airport would lead to a crushing increase in tourism that might render the city unlivable. It’s almost like the Sieneese have known how good they’ve had it, and have been much more concerned with maintaining the status quo than in doing anything that might risk changing the fabric of the city.

More generally, the Sieneese have kept some traces of their city’s traditions and cultural heritage, like the Sieneese love of order and detail, for good work and a simple life, aspects that were also “naturally” congenial for the many immigrants who moved to Siena in the postwar era from former sharecropping farms. This is why the factious nature of the world of the *contrade* was easily conjoined with the spirit of the group, of belonging, which is an ineradicable element, and which gives space to every ideology that inclines toward solidarity, almost collectivism. From this same impulse also springs Siena’s incredible social welfare institutions: the religious institution of the Misericordia and the modern lay organization, Pubblica Assistenza. Both boast thousands of members, including many volunteers.

The world of the *contrade* has outlived every regime: the Medici and Lorena eras, Unification, fascism, and communism. Numerous powers had ruled the city but without penetrating to the core of Sieneese society, as if it were almost impermeable, too tough, and rigid in its antiquity. The appeals to keep the *contrade* out of politics

attested to multiple attempts at ensuring consent within the political world by way of the *contrada* life, but these kinds of attempts usually met resistance. The basic culture of the *contrade* has remained intact, even as the entire world has changed dramatically in the many centuries since the *contrada* were first formed. Much of the solidarity of the medieval *contrada* has survived, a solidarity long ago rooted in a desire to work collectively to fight crime, blatant immorality, fire, and to improve life within the *contrada* for the individual and the collective.

Siennese society in modern times has been built upon that idea, so well expressed by Lorenzetti in the *Allegory of Good Government*, of concord and unity in support of the common good. Dissent has long been frowned upon, and non-conformists and reformers have often been marginalized, as they have threatened to disturb the city's historical and anthropological equilibrium.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the city ran the risk of falling into a kind of parochialism or localism: closure in the face of the new, rooted, as it was, in these cults and rites. But the majority of the population felt like it was all worthwhile. Even thanks to the optimal dimension in demographic terms, Siena could boast of a citizenry that was relatively compact, which assured a precise identity for the city and made it a place of stable residency even for those who came from elsewhere. With this, Siena consolidated its historical capacity to prudently assimilate what was new, renovating itself while staying the same.

The paradox of Siennese reality, perhaps one of the most striking aspects, is Siena's "hierarchical egalitarianism." This oxymoron sums up Siennese civilization in a land of illusions. In fact, this oscillation between egalitarianism and the vertical nature of society's order has continued, despite the success of the Left in the postwar era. There is still much left over from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from an earlier age when the *popolani* (common folk) of the Palio would surround their noble "protectors." In short, Siena's nobility has survived in many ways, even if not in name.

By the year 2000, Siena hovered in the top spots of national rankings for quality of life, as reported in *Sole 24 Ore* and *Italia Oggi*, and the Siennese had reconciled what was irreconcilable: the ancient republican spirit of individual civic virtues, and the democratic one that valorized the virtues of the collective civic body; individualism and collectivism seemed to intertwine thanks to the strength of Siena's cultural glue. With an influx of immigrants to the city, primarily resulting from the development of the university and banking sector, as well as the rise of service jobs in the tourist industry, the trends have continued. The new transplants, rather than denying the city and its traditions, often join those already in existence in the celebration of the rites and the myths of Siena's civic identity. Despite some conservative protests about the changing face of the *contrada*, the vast majority of Siennese welcome the new arrivals and their embrace of Siena's cultural patrimony, its traditions, and its shared identity. While the Siennese have benefited in many ways from all of these developments, the growth of the student body at the university, which by the turn of the twenty-first century numbered 15,000, provoked strongly negative reactions among the citizenry. Many complained worried about the effect of the

booming student population on housing prices and the way in which the university was changing the demographics and physical makeup of the city. Resentment toward the university even led the *contrade* to refuse to run an extraordinary Palio that was to be held in honor of the university's 750th anniversary.

The fall of Monte dei Paschi

Siena entered the new millennium with dignity. Work, restoration, and expositions were being undertaken everywhere, while fiber optic cables were reaching all of the residences of the city. The Babbo Monte (Daddy Monte), as the Siennese referred to their bank, was a symbolic image that was also realistic, and which justified liberty by way of the idea of *filius-familias* that the Siennese could often allow themselves, or that they held up as some kind of ideal model. Much of the political and institutional culture of the city had long been obfuscated from public view beginning with the closure of the noble and oligarchic classes in the seventeenth century, and then with the homogenization of the ruling class with the national political system in the twentieth.

This obfuscation and the resultant political apathy of many in Siena could explain the lack of public outcry at the revolving door between appointees to city government and the bank. Positions were passed between the unions, and between the commune and the Monte dei Paschi, with consequences that were at times deleterious for both of the institutions but without an easy solution. In 1981, the Siennese passed legislation that allowed employees of the Monte dei Paschi in management positions to have access to spots on the Communal Council. From that time on, there was a frenetic rush toward the positions within the commune by the dependents of the Monte dei Paschi. In fact, all of Siena's mayors from September 1983 to May of 2011 were active trade unionists who were dependent on the Monte dei Paschi.

Out of concern for potential abuses that could easily develop from such a relationship between the Monte and the city government, Roberto Franchi and the Christian Democrats began a push to privatize banks like the Monte dei Paschi in 1988. If put into effect, the law envisioned by Franchi would have transformed public institutions of credit like the Monte dei Paschi into limited holding companies (*Società per azioni*). Many in Siena feared that such a change at the bank would prove devastating to Siennese employment and prosperity, leading journalists Marco Falorni and Stefano Bisi to launch a petition against the transformation in 1991, out of concern that the historic ties between the bank and the Siennese community would be severed. The referendum on the problem of the Monte as a private bank was never held, though in the debate over the need for privatization, the problem of government-bank relations in Siena was precisely captured: "Credit is acquired from the Commune towards the bank. The city is governed through the Monte with the benediction of the political party system." The problems that Siena faces today can already be seen in this statement.

One newspaper, *Il Cittadino*, began to seek signatures in support of the idea that the Monte dei Paschi was inextricably tied to Siena's identity, and thus against the transformation of the bank into a private limited holding company. All of this actually brought about an active committee for the defense of the Monte dei Paschi bank, and the publication of a *Dossier Monte dei Paschi di Siena*. This work, edited by Mauro Aurigi and a Sienese professor of banking law, Franco Belli, argued that the bank was property of the city of Siena and therefore of the commune, and thus, the courts shouldn't be allowed to force Siena to have to privatize its own bank.

The debates surrounding the Monte dei Paschi became increasingly thornier but without resolution. Some requested that the private property of the bank remain insured for the Sienese community in order to avoid it becoming a private holding company. After more than five years of debate, the privatization law passed in November 1994, and by August 1995, the Monte dei Paschi had launched as a private holding company. Simultaneously, the Monte dei Paschi Foundation was created, founded, as it were, as the owner of the Monte dei Paschi and its largest shareholder. Bank statutes continued to dictate a mixed management system, with bank management elected by the central government and by the local institutions. In 1998, the bank began publicly trading shares of the company: 25 percent right out of the gate and 28 percent later, despite resistance from Mayor Pierluigi Piccini, who pressed for the Foundation to continue to hold 100 percent of the shares. The shares reached a price of 3.85 euro, eventually climbing to 5 euro following the bank's acquisition of Bank 121.

To the surprise of many who had expected two-term well-respected mayor Piccini to become the Foundation's next president, an outsider from Calabria, Giuseppe Mussari, was chosen instead in 2001. From his position within the Foundation, Mussari quickly managed to gain the trust and support of the important players in Siena, pushing to enrich and enlarge the bank as never before. When his term was coming to an end in 2006, he took advantage of the fact that as president of the Foundation, he was the largest shareholder of the bank, and had himself appointed president of the bank. While there were certainly voices in Siena who objected to Mussari's actions and the rapidity of the changes seen at the bank, for a long time, it was hard to argue with the results: between 2001 and 2007, the bank's profits more than doubled.

The bank's success was a boon for its largest stakeholder, the Foundation, as well as the city of Siena: in the 15 years from its formation in 1995 until 2010, the Foundation doled out an astonishing amount of money: almost two billion euros supporting projects of local importance, funding Siena's biotech facility; providing money to local publishing houses to encourage scholarship on the city; providing a new training facility for Palio horses, as well as money for journals, university projects, and much more. The bank sponsored Siena's professional basketball team, renamed Montepaschi Siena, and owing to the bank's financial support, the team won seven national titles in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Likewise, in these same years, the bank's sponsorship helped propel Siena's soccer team into Italy's prestigious Serie A league. In all of these ways, the Sienese dramatically

benefited economically, culturally, socially, and materially from the Monte, more than ever in recent years.

Unfortunately, the record profits at the bank were built upon a series of risky investments that proved to be calamitous for the bank, the Foundation, and Siena. Worst of all was Mussari's decision as president of the bank to purchase Antonveneta in 2007 for \$9 billion dollars in cash. To fund the all-cash purchase, the bank borrowed \$6 billion dollars in the form of risky derivative trades from JP Morgan in 2008, with the Foundation buying half the shares. In effect, the Foundation had begun lending to the bank and by the end of the crisis, it would lose almost all of its assets. What's perhaps most amazing is that the Antonveneta bank acquisition took place without the knowledge of the bank's legal "owner," the president of the Foundation, Gabriello Mancini. The deal has since been determined to have been worth \$2.9 billion, less than a third of what Siena spent to acquire the bank. Even worse, recent investigators have argued persuasively that "the Antonveneta acquisition burdened the MPS, from a financial point of view, with a comprehensive expenditure of \$19 billion euros."

In the aftermath of the global economic crisis that broke out in the fall of 2008, the bank soon found its very existence imperiled. In an attempt to save the bank from bankruptcy, the foundation was forced (according to national rules) to sell most of its shares in the bank to raise capital. The bank's losses only continued to grow, leading Italian and European authorities to launch numerous investigations into the bank's collapse and the role that fraud, corruption, and a lack of oversight all played in creating this disaster.

In a decade, from the acquisition of Antonveneta in 2008 to 2018, the Foundation has lost assets of \$7 billion euros. Its share of ownership in the bank has fallen from 45.8 percent in 2011 to .003 percent by the end of 2017, meaning that the city of Siena no longer owns the bank. The Foundation possesses only \$223 million in assets, down from nearly \$8 billion just a few years ago. For the Sienese, this situation is understood as a devastating tragedy, with the Foundation having so generously funded so many civil and social services for the benefit of the city. The Sienese population was the greatest beneficiary of an astonishing amount of largesse by the Monte dei Paschi. These projects were numerous, and they helped the city capitalize on its aesthetic beauty as the many renovations on the facades of the city "restored" the city to an immaculate condition that was in fact far more pristine than at any time in its history. What happens now that the money is gone and the Foundation's largesse is no longer possible?

Siena today

The Sienese are still very much in the process of adjusting to life without the generous assistance of the Monte dei Paschi. Certainly, they are already feeling the effects in numerous ways. For instance, Montepaschi Siena, the best basketball team in Italy during the first decade of the twenty-first century, went bankrupt in 2014 owing to the loss of the bank's sponsorship. It also had its championships vacated,

due to allegations of fraud against team management. With the collapse of the bank, Siena's soccer team also went bankrupt in 2014. Since then, both teams have been reconstituted, but in far less prestigious leagues and with much less talent. Like Siena's sports teams, everyone in Siena has been forced to adjust to living with less aid from the bank, from book publishers and cultural organizations, to social welfare programs and even the *contrade*. Thus, undeniably, the city will continue to be negatively affected by the collapse of the bank for years to come. At the same time, it is important to remember that the Monte dei Paschi's financial power was, in fact, a recent development. After all, it was only since the 1930s and then especially after the end of World War II that the Monte began its ascent to become the third-largest bank in Italy and a major employer in the city. In other words, for most of its history, Siena survived and even flourished, even without significant support from the bank. In the years to come, the Sienese will have to learn to do so once again.

And in fact, despite the failure of the Monte, Siena and the Sienese have plenty to be proud of: Siena today is one of the greatest small cities in the world, with well-maintained monuments and some of the most moving and important works of early Renaissance art. The Campo has to be one of the greatest public spaces in the world, providing a perfect blend of iconic medieval architecture, restaurants and caf  s, and open space. Every clear afternoon, the Campo beach (*spiaggia*), as it is called, is full of locals and tourists, soaking in the last hours of sun, indulging in a gelato on a hot day. As you look around, what is most striking is that everything seems to be in its right place. The Campo, this most public of spaces, stands as the perfect representation of Siena's history and the spirit of its people. The center of the city's three *terzi*, the site of government protests, and the site where the Sienese, through their *contrade*, still come together to compete twice a year in the Palio. The quality of life in Siena remains one of the highest in Italy, as does life expectancy. The Sienese benefit from the many close relationships fostered through their *contrade*, from the robust social welfare and assistance programs available in the city, and from a cuisine that emphasizes fresh, whole foods.

Ultimately, what makes Siena so special are the *contrade*. No other city anywhere has anything quite like it – the *contrada* flags, each interesting and distinctive in color, the drumming, the formality, the history, the *contrada* churches, and social clubs, group dinners in the streets of the *contrada*, and garden parties. And, of course, the Palio itself: no other sporting event anywhere else has as much history, rooted to a particular place, and as much ritualistic and religious significance as the Palio. And the Palio matters because of the *contrade* themselves and all they represent for the Sienese. There is a magic to the world of the *contrade*, and to become part of a *contrada* is to be let into that secret world. Through an ordinary door on an unassuming sloped street, one enters into the garden of the *contrada* of Brucco where, during summer nights, one finds hundreds upon hundreds of people in a beautiful garden filled with makeshift *contrada* restaurants and bars, that serve Tuscan barbeque, pizzas, or full multicourse meals. Bands play live music, a huddled mass partakes in low stakes betting games that raise money for the *contrada*, and children



FIGURE 7.3 Taking possession of the *drappellone* after a Palio victory. Members of the winning *contrada* claim the *drappellone* for their *contrada* immediately following the race

play in the grass, dance to the music, or play on a small playground. The thrill of discovering hidden gems like Brucco's summer festival (open to everyone) is just a single example of the magical world all the *contrade* create throughout the year. Each of Siena's 17 *contrade*, after all, has its own gardens, signature events and celebrations, unique *contrada* songs, and legendary stories of Palio victories.

Throughout Siena's long history, the city has overcome countless obstacles to build a truly exceptional society. Rarely have the Siennese been able to control their own destiny, from the time of the Guelfs and Ghibellines to the age of the Medici and beyond. But time and again, by turning inward and focusing on their local neighborhoods, by valuing their history and monuments and artistic treasures, by prioritizing social and civic events and the welfare needs of the people, and by constructing elaborate rituals and ceremonies understood and appreciated only by those within the community, the Siennese have always managed to rise above whatever political, economic, or social problems the city has faced. May this give hope to the Siennese, and to all of those in the world who love this extraordinary city.

Notes

- 1 Mario Bracci, an anti-Fascist jurist who served as rector of the university, was a communal councilor, and a judge in the first Constitutional court. Having signed Benedetto Croce's anti-Fascist *Manifesto* in 1925, he sought out like-minded intellectuals like Ranuccio

- Bianchi Bandinelli, who would become a militant member of the PCI, and Mario delle Piane, a socialist professor at the university.
- 2 This designation had been pushed through by Chiurco, the leader of Sienese fascism and the person responsible for the execution by firing squad of the young dissenters who refused to be drafted into the service of the Social Republic. Even the archbishop operated in Rome through the Vatican for this purpose.
 - 3 His magazine had always been critical of the official Fascist political line and expressed Siena's sarcastic and satirical spirit.
 - 4 To cite just a few examples: the race is called the *carrier*, and the *masgalano* is the name for the silver artistic object that is given as the prize to the *contrada* who had the best *comparsa* (performance) during the historic procession (that is, the *Corteo Storico*) that takes place directly before the Palio.

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